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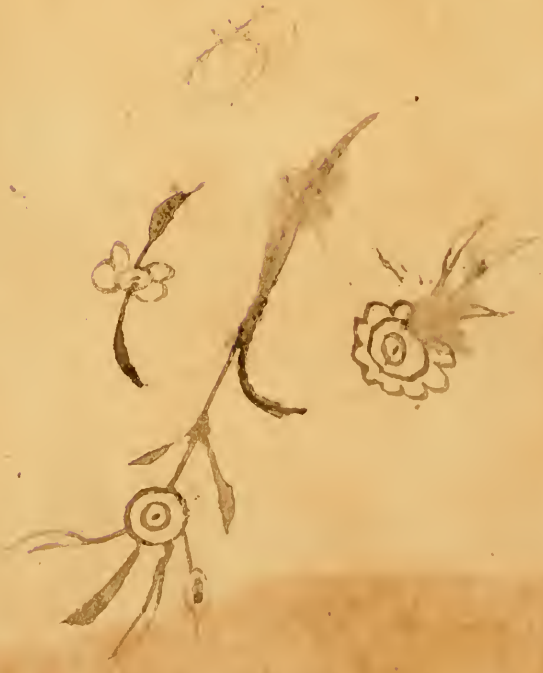

Presented by the Honble

Judge Livingston, of New York,

to Theological Seminary, of

the Presbyterian Church.

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE GOSPEL-HISTORY JUSTIFIED:

AND THE

Truth of the CHRISTIAN Revelation DEMONSTRATED,

From the Laws and Conſtitution of Human Nature.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

Volume I.

By the late *ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL*, D. D. *Regius* Profeſſor of Divinity and Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory in the Univerſity of St. *Andrew*'s.

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M, DCC, LIX.

To His GRACE

ARCHIBALD

DUKE of ARGYLE, *&c. &c.*

Hereditary Great Maſter of the HOUSHOLD, LORD Juſtice-General of *SCOTLAND*, LORD-KEEPER of the Great Seal, and One of His MAJESTY's Moſt Honourable Privy-Council,

This BOOK is

moſt humbly dedicated, by

His GRACE's

moſt Devoted

and moſt Obedient

humble Servant,

The WIDOW of the AUTHOR.

THE

PREFACE.

IN my *Inquiry into the Extent of Human Powers with reſpect to matters of Religion*, I have made it appear, that mankind, left to themſelves, or having no information from Heaven, are not able, in the uſe of their natural faculties, to diſcover the being and perfections of God, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, the great fundamental articles of natural religion.

In that argument, I confeſs, I have againſt me, not only all our Deiſts, whoſe cauſe is thereby totally ruined; but a number of Chriſtians, who do not ſeem to have attended to that queſtion, in the manner wherein they might have been led to apprehend the real truth of things: Nor do I take upon me to make it good in the way of ſpeculation; I appeal to facts: And the fact is moſt apparent, even in the caſe of the moſt knowing and learned Heathen Philoſophers: The conſequence therefore is, *Revelation is neceſſary*. And as a great part of the world is now poſſeſſed of the knowledge of thoſe eſſential articles of Religion,

that lay beyond the reach of human diſcovery, this I take to be a proof, as neceſſary or infallible as that of the cauſe from the effect, that in truth *God has been pleaſed to make a ſupernatural Revelation to mankind.*

Thus far then having cleared our way, it ſeems only to remain, that among the many different religions that pretend to have come from Heaven, we carefully inquire, which of them has the beſt and faireſt, or the only title to that original. And, without entering into a minute diſquiſition, in comparing together the ſeveral religions now ſubſiſting in the world, every man, upon a general view, muſt be ſenſible, that before all others the Chriſtian inſtitution is, on many accounts, infinitely preferable, and the moſt likely to have come from the great Parent of mankind. So that in the following ſheets, I undertake to explain the truth of the Chriſtian Revelation in particular; and therein I hope, having clearly vindicated the Authenticity of the Goſpel-Hiſtory, it will appear to ſuch of the human ſpecies as think freely, and will give themſelves the trouble fairly to attend to the movements of the human mind, and as theſe muſt neceſſarily direct a man's actions in ſuch particular circumſtances, That *the Apoſtles of our Lord were intelligent ſincere honeſt men, firm and reſolute in their ſervice, always in the ſober uſe of their reaſon, and during the whole courſe of their miniſtry, under the powerful influences of Heaven*; and conſequently,

quently, that *the religion of* Jesus *which they taught and propagated, is undoubtedly a Divine Revelation.*

Many are the books that have been written upon this argument, and unanswerable are the demonstrations that have been given of the truth and divinity of our holy religion. It is not therefore to make up the want of proof, or to supply the defects of other Writers, that I here enter into this question. But, as I do most sincerely believe, and am thoroughly persuaded, that the religion of the blessed Jesus is of the last consequence, and of infinite concern to mankind; and our Infidels are still continuing their endeavours to break the credit of this religion, and to rob the world of so inestimable a blessing; I would gladly offer my assistance in exposing the folly of those unreasonable men, and put people in mind of the mighty evidence we have in favour of Christianity; that if we are not able to convince Deists themselves, we may at least convince the world about them, of the unfair dishonourable part they are acting; and thereby prevent, in some measure, the spreading of their pernicious principles. And as every man, who, in relation to any subject, is furnished with any stock of ideas, has always his own way of ranging those ideas, or of connecting them together, by which means an argument has the advantage of being set in different lights, and may therefore, among the different

different taſtes of mankind, come to be more univerſally reliſhed; ſo I would fain hope that the light wherein I have ſet the following argument, may be attended with ſome good conſequences, that if it ſhall make no proſelytes, it will tend to confirm Chriſtians in their belief, and ſerve to enable them *to give a reaſon of the faith that is in them.*

In my education, which, I thank God, was free and without any tincture of bigotry, I had a view to the Miniſtry of the Church. But before I ſhould enter into that public character, that would intitle me to teach others the Chriſtian religion, I judged it neceſſary, highly reaſonable, firſt to ſatisfy myſelf as to the grounds upon which the Goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt* muſt be eſteemed a Divine Revelation. And here I made this plain obvious reflection: *If the Chriſtian inſtitution be an impoſition upon the world, of neceſſity the firſt Publiſhers of the Goſpel muſt have been either Impoſtors or Enthuſiaſts.* In order therefore to come at the concluſion, which reaſon, or a fair inquiry would lead me to, I ſet myſelf to examine into the real truth of the character of the Apoſtles of our Lord: And the reſult of that examination, which I then made in my younger years, and whereof that particular branch concerning Enthuſiaſm was publiſhed in the year 1730, I now preſume to lay before the world; to which I have added ſeveral ſections ſerviceable to the main argument, and

and vindicating the Apoſtles from ſome particular exceptions of later Writers, which I conſidered as they happened to come in my way, and as I judged them worth the regarding.

People indeed may be fond of their own method of doing, and conceit, that the beſt that others can do, is to imitate them: But without any biaſs of that nature, I think I may take upon me, in my time of life, to adviſe young men who apply themſelves to the ſtudy of Theology, to follow the ſame courſe. Let them carefully and impartially read and ſtudy the Scriptures themſelves, and ſome at leaſt of thoſe many books, eſpecially thoſe of the greateſt reputation, that have been writ for and againſt the Chriſtian Revelation: And if, after all their ſearch, and their utmoſt care to be rightly informed, they are not fully ſatisfied as to the real truth of the Goſpel of Jeſus, let them, in time, direct their view to ſome other buſineſs of life, and not enter into that ſacred character, which they moſt dreadfully profane, and wherein they muſt involve themſelves in the vileſt and baſeſt hypocriſy. But as, in my apprehenſion, an unbiaſſed ſtudy of the Scriptures, and a careful attention to the proofs of our holy religion, and to the anſwers made to the objections of Infidels, will moſt certainly lead every ſober and conſiderate man to perceive the divine original of the Chriſtian inſtitution: In this caſe, let thoſe who mean to enter into holy

holy orders, fix their meditation, and impreſs their minds with a deep ſenſe, a penetrating conviction, that the Goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt* is undoubtedly from Heaven. And that this ſenſe may be the deeper and the more penetrating, and withal the more laſting and durable, let them exerciſe their genius, and compoſe a defence of the Chriſtian Revelation upon thoſe grounds, upon which they dare venture to recommend it to the belief of mankind. This is no more but the qualifying themſelves to diſcharge their duty commanded in the Goſpel, which, knowing the ground is good upon which it is ſupported, approves of no blind votaries; *Be ready always*, ſays the Goſpel of our Lord, *to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you*, 1 Pet. iii. 15. And if along with this important branch of ſtudy, they likewiſe carefully peruſe ſuch excellent books, as Biſhop *Burnet's Paſtoral Caſe*, I am apt to think, that when they are admitted into their public character, they are in the way of becoming public bleſſings to mankind, and of giving the world a ſenſible demonſtration, that Infidels are enemies to goodneſs, in oppoſing a religion whoſe Miniſters practiſe and teach *that wiſdom that is from above*, a Divine Philoſophy that purifies the human mind; that inſpires us with the love of God, and the love of our neighbour, with every kind and ſocial affection; that awakens all our powers, and enables us to

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riſe above this world in the purſuit of a glorious immortality. This advice I preſume to give to our young men, who are aiming at the character of the public teachers of the religion of *Jeſus*, and upon whoſe behaviour the credit of religion, among the bulk of our ſpecies, greatly depends: And as I here take my laſt farewell of the Public, let them look upon this advice, as the laſt advice of a dying friend, who highly values the ſacred office, as it may be improved, which, in numberleſs inſtances, I am confident it is, to the nobleſt purpoſes; and whoſe hearty good wiſhes for peace and happineſs, not reſtrained to ſect or party, but widely diffuſed, comprehend all mankind. I have only to add; as our Students in Divinity will find it a very delightful and improving entertainment to peruſe the writings of the Heathen; ſo not only in the following Treatiſe, but in thoſe others I have publiſhed, they may ſee the uſe to be made of thoſe Writings to the advantage of natural and revealed religion, whereof the advancement ought to be always in their eye.

But what can one imagine is the main end, which in their rude contempt of the Goſpel of the Holy *Jeſus*, our modern Free-thinkers are really driving at? If it is the characteriſtic of a Free-thinker to oppoſe eſtabliſhed opinions in matters of religion, popular ſuperſtition and bigotry; the Apoſtles of our Lord were, beyond queſtion, the moſt reſolute and determined Free-thinkers

thinkers that ever breathed common air: And we know by what particular views they were animated. Their great deſign was, to put an end to that idolatry and ſuperſtition, to thoſe falſe and abſurd religions, to all thoſe immoral and infamous opinions and practices, with which human nature, for many ages, had been diſgraced and corrupted. But here they did not reſt, and leave the world deſtitute of all religion whatſoever; they proceeded in their deſign, and, in place of the abominations then every where prevalent, they introduced and propagated the knowledge of the true God, and the aſſurance of an after-life and immortality: they publiſhed to mankind a religious worſhip ſuited to the perfections of God; and taught us a ſyſtem of laws calculated to our happineſs in private and public life, in time and to eternity. Thus the Prieſt of *Jupiter* regarding the Apoſtles as gods, was actually upon the point of honouring them with ſacrifices, *Which when the Apoſtles heard of, they ran in among the people, crying out, Sirs, Why do ye theſe things? We alſo are men of like paſſions with you, and preach unto you, that ye ſhould turn from theſe vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the ſea, and all things that are therein,* Acts xiv. 13. Their general Command is, that *we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, in all goodneſs, righteouſneſs, and truth; and following peace with all men, and holineſs, without*

out which, they tell us, *no man ſhall ſee the Lord,* Tit. ii. 10. Eph. v. 9. Heb. xii. 14. The deſign therefore of the Apoſtles of our Lord, is to bring the world *from darkneſs to light, from the power of Satan unto God*; it is to perſuade mankind, upon the moſt powerful motives, to live here in the love and practice of all goodneſs, that we may live hereafter in the enjoyment of all happineſs. A glorious deſign! in the purſuit whereof they did and ſuffered beyond the common rate of mortals, and thereby expreſſed an extraordinary love and charity, an unparalleled kindneſs and beneficence to mankind. So that thus far, may I not hope, every reaſonable man will be ſo far from calumniating, that he will highly applaud the Apoſtles, who with ſuch a deſign oppoſed the idolatry, the ſuperſtition and bigotry every where rampant all over the face of the earth? But ſome people, it would ſeem, are pleaſed to apprehend, That that antient ſet of bold reſolute Free-thinkers have brought mankind only to exchange one kind of ſuperſtition for another; and therefore a modern ſet of Free-thinkers have ſtarted up among us, who eagerly oppoſe the religion which they publiſhed. And what, I beſeech you, is the grand plot of thoſe our modern reformers? Whatever it be, they carry it on, not after the ſame manner, or with the ſame diſpoſitions, with which the Apoſtles conducted theirs.

In the management of their design, the Apostles, always attending to this excellent maxim, which our modern Free-thinkers seem to have wholy neglected, viz. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*, are acted by no intemperate fiery zeal, by no mad enthusiastic rage; there is no anger, or revenge, or fury in their passions, breaking out in rude audacious invectives against the public religions established by law, or in the foulest and most abusive language upon persons and things that are held sacred; nor in matters so serious as are those of religion, do we find them in an unmanly levity and wantonness of heart, any where playing the ludicrous droll; of no such folly, insolence, or outrage can one single instance be met withal, either in their temper, or in their language, or in any part of their behaviour: But in a plain and simple narration they give us the history of their Master, the great Author of the religion they taught; with a gravity becoming their undertaking, they propose to us his doctrines, as matters indeed of the last consequence, which they therefore invite and press us to examine and embrace upon the highest encouragements, but far from insinuating they must be forced or obtruded upon us by violence, and only telling us what shall be the issue of our receiving or rejecting them in futurity; designing the good of all mankind, they travel through the world, and in circumstances the most provoking, the

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apteſt to rouſe and inflame the angry revengeful paſſions of human nature, they are unprovoked and intire maſters of themſelves; they are meek and gentle, patient and forgiving; they ſtill retain their univerſal charity, and expreſs the moſt friendly concern for the real happineſs of their bittereſt enemies. After this manner, and with ſuch diſpoſitions, did thoſe antient reſolute Free-thinkers, the Apoſtles of our Lord, carry on their deſign, in oppoſing the idolatry, the ſuperſtition and bigotry, into which mankind had ſunk: And let the writings of our modern Free-thinkers, compared with thoſe of the Apoſtles, teſtify to the world, how widely different their conduct is in oppoſing the religion of *Jeſus*. ſuch are the meaſures they employ, that if from thoſe one may judge of the religion they would frame for mankind, it muſt be full of wrathful ſcurrilous paſſions.

But by what meaſures ſoever thoſe Gentlemen may be pleaſed to proſecute their deſign, I am at a loſs to underſtand what it is, or what is the great point of view they are aiming at. The religion of *Jeſus*, at its firſt appearance in the world, was very ill received. Princes and people, Prieſts and Philoſophers, men of all ranks, vigorouſly combined in a violent oppoſition to the Apoſtles, uſing every method to ſuppreſs their doctrines, and every where diſtreſſing their perſons with the cruelleſt perſecutions: And all this we know they did with

a reſolute purpoſe to preſerve the idolatry and ſuperſtition, the worſhip of the falſe impious gods, and all the abominations, which then prevailed in the world. How far it is matter of regret to our modern Free-thinkers, that thoſe firſt oppoſers of Chriſtianity were not more ſucceſsful, and that Heatheniſm did not prevail, and that worſhip continue eſtabliſhed among mankind, that was paid to *Jupiter*, and *Venus*, and other deities, to whom human blood, and all ſorts of the vileſt proſtitutions, were acceptable offerings and delightful ſervices, I will not pretend to determine: Only in venting their unaccountable ſpite againſt the Chriſtian Revelation, they ſometimes ſeem to alledge, that the world would have done better, had they been ſtill the worſhippers of that rabble of gods and goddeſſes which the Goſpel has expoſed and baniſhed. But whatever be the misfortune, which thoſe Gentlemen may think has befallen the world from the prevalency of Chriſtianity, let them now preciſely declare, What is the great end they have in view, whilſt they ſo violently oppoſe that inſtitution. No doubt, as *Nero* and other *Roman* Emperors intended by their perſecutions, and as *Celſus*, *Porphyry*, *Julian*, &c. intended by their writings; our Infidels are likewiſe intending the total extirpation of the religion of *Jeſus*. But in place thereof, what is it they propoſe ſhould be ſubſtituted? Moſt of thoſe Gentlemen having made their objections, and expreſſed their fierce

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and outragious paſſions in the fouleſt and moſt indecent language, againſt the Chriſtian Revelation, ſeem to concern themſelves no farther about the religion of mankind. But, as it is impoſſible for mankind, without ſome kind of religion, to ſubſiſt together, I cannot ſuffer myſelf to think, that they mean to rob the world of all religion whatſoever. Let us ſuppoſe then, what Heaven has declared ſhall never happen; let us, I ſay, ſuppoſe, that theſe Gentlemen have carried their deſign, and Chriſtianity is wholly extinguiſhed. After what manner will they now be pleaſed to diſpoſe of us, or what is the religion wherein they would chuſe to train us up, or which they would recommend to our belief and practice? The Religion of *Jeſus* is, indeed, not very ſocial; it will admit of no object of worſhip but the true God, and of no form of worſhip but of his appointment. But, before this religion made its appearance, there was in the world a vaſt variety of religious objects, and religious forms of worſhip; and now that, we here ſuppoſe, it is quite aboliſhed, do theſe aboliſhers of Chriſtianity mean to bring us back to where the world was about ſeventeen hundred years ago, to thoſe religious inſtitutions which then every where prevailed among mankind? Or, if they do not mean to oppreſs us with ſo great a mobb of gods and goddeſſes, and their abſurd and infamous, and pernicious worſhip; is there any particular religious

ligious inſtitution, any where to be found in the world, then profeſſed by any particular man, or ſociety of men, which, to the excluſion of every other inſtitution, they deſign we ſhould now take up withal? If either of theſe be intended, is it not fair we ſhould be informed of it? Or, have they diſcovered any new ſyſtem of religion, not before known in the world, wherein they deſign we ſhould be inſtructed and confirmed? And, if this be the caſe, why do they not publiſh their new ſyſtem, and honeſty let us know, what God we muſt ſerve, and what worſhip we muſt pay him, and by what motives, ſuited to our rational nature, we muſt be animated in his ſervice? It cannot well be expected that men, not altogether indifferent to matters ſo very important, will change their religion, on any other conſideration, but for a better. They ſpeak, indeed, in general, of a religion of Nature, which they ſeem to imagine all mankind, left to themſelves, would naturally follow; after the ſame manner, I ſuppoſe, as brute creatures follow their inſtinct. A very ſenſeleſs conceit in the caſe of creatures, whoſe paſſions do firſt prevail and prevent all other government, and never tamely yield up their empire. But would theſe gentlemen favour the world, as *Spinoſa* has done, with a particular explanation of their ſentiments concerning God, and the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, which, when rightly

rightly apprehended, are the great foundation of true rational religion, I am afraid we ſhould find them in the utmoſt confuſion, differing widely from one another, and breaking into various ſects and parties.

It is true, the ſhrewdeſt book I know of againſt the Chriſtian revelation, mentions thoſe fundamental articles of religion; and, upon the truth of ſuch principles, recommends to mankind the *law of reaſon*, or the *religion of Nature*, as the only religion that can come from God, or bear the ſtamp of his authority. From whence the Author would infer, that the religion of *Jeſus*, in particular, is an impoſition upon the world, and can be counted no divine Revelation. Here therefore the Chriſtian inſtitution is ſet aſide, and in its room is ſubſtituted the religion of Nature, grounded upon the being and perfections of God, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. But I would beg to be informed, in what age, and in what part of the world, was this religion known and profeſſed among mankind? We are told, it is as old as the creation. And no doubt, the religion of Nature is as old as the nature of things; and ſo is every geometrical or mathematical truth, tho', I verily believe, all mankind were not mathematicians from the beginning. But, I ſay, when or where was the perſon, the family, or the nation, upon the face of the earth, that knew and profeſſed this religion, as contradiſtinguiſhed

ſtinguiſhed from every other religious inſtitution? From the earlieſt times, to this preſent age, ranſack all the records in the world, I dare venture to affirm, not one inſtance ſhall be found of people's profeſſing only this particular ſyſtem of religion. It is therefore a religious inſtitution abſolutely new, which Dr. *Tindal* propoſes to mankind, an inſtitution that never yet obtained in the world, and which, I ſtrongly incline to think, never will obtain. I confeſs, that in this Gentleman's view of things, one might expect to find only this religion ſubſiſting among mankind, and that the finding it quite otherwiſe, is the moſt ſurpriſing event that can poſſibly happen. In his opinion, the knowledge of the religion of Nature is a matter of no difficulty: He apprehends that all its eſſential articles are obvious to every common underſtanding, and that no man needs an inſtructor to teach him the being and perfections of God, the immortality of the ſoul, or a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, and what particular duties, in his ſeveral relations, are incumbent upon him. So that every man being able to inſtruct himſelf in the religion of Nature, and this religion being confeſſedly the great foundation of human happineſs in both worlds, *Revelation is needleſs*, and every other religious inſtitution is vain and to no purpoſe. In this view it is that I have conſiderd Dr. *Tindal's* book in my

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Neceſſity of Revelation, and I ſtill hope, that I have there, from undoubted matters of fact, clearly demonſtrated the falſeneſs of his argument.

No doubt, Dr. *Tindal* was capable of demonſtrating all the eſſential articles of natural religion, and of ſhewing their foundation in the nature and reaſon of things. But how came this Gentleman by all this knowledge? The beſt and wiſeſt of the Heathen Philoſophers were not able to acquire it. They were ignorant of God, and had it not in their power to diſcover him. Not long before the Chriſtian Revelation, the great *Roman* Orator and Philoſopher, maſter of all the Heathen learning, laughs at the notion of an infinite mind, or of the true God, which *Anaxagoras*, the reputed author of it, could have had only from tradition; he rejects it as an abſurdity, and in the end recommends the ſupreme God of the Stoics, an ardor, or æther, a material fire pervading the univerſe, as the being whoſe Divinity ſeems the moſt probable. In fact, therefore, it is certain, that, at the time when the Goſpel was firſt publiſhed, the Heathen world was without God, and all the different ſects of Philoſophers had each of them, for their ſupreme God, only the creature of their own imagination. A moſt amazing ſtate of ignorance! But how ſoon after that happy Æra did the knowledge of the true God prevail among all nations; and

with what conſtancy has it hitherto been preſerved in the Chriſtian world?

I am apt to think, that none of thoſe Gentlemen, who now propoſe to aboliſh Chriſtianity, and to eſtabliſh in its place the religion of Nature, are ſo very conceited of their own abilities, as to imagine, that had they lived in the days of *Pythagoras*, or of *Socrates*, or of *Cicero*, *&c.* they would have been the Philoſophers to diſcover the being and perfections of God, they would have made the world ſenſible of their ſuperior penetration in demonſtrating all the eſſential articles of natural religion. And as it cannot well be thought, that our preſent religious projectors would have gone beyond the reach of all antient Philoſophers; and we are well aſſured, that the Heathen world, after the days of *Cicero*, had their knowledge of God from the Chriſtian Revelation; may not theſe Gentlemen have the modeſty or juſtice to own, that the ſame great article of knowledge is derived to them from the ſame ſource? How they could have it otherwiſe is unimaginable. And is it not a mean piece of ingratitude, an unworthy perverſion of the heavenly gift, to make uſe of the knowledge they have, and which they could only have from Revelation, in deſtroying Revelation itſelf?

The bleſſed *Jeſus* taught the world, what no Philoſopher ever before taught, and what he himſelf could not have taught but from Heaven, all the fundamental articles, and all the

the great duties of natural religion, originally belonging to rational creatures of our make, in ſociety (not in enmity) with God, and with one another: And this religion he has interwoven into the eſſence, if I may ſpeak ſo, of his inſtitution. But he likewiſe taught other articles, concerning a public indemnity, *&c.* ſuited to the ſinful guilty circumſtances, to the broken corrupted powers of mankind; not in ſociety, but in enmity with God, and alienated from one another: And all ſuch articles are intended to recover the primary religion of Nature, or to reſtore mankind to their firſt conſtitution, as we came righteous and pure out of the hands of our Maker; that being made partakers of the divine nature, we may be found fit for the heavenly manſions. Now, I ſay, do not theſe Gentlemen act a ſtrange unaccountable part, who, adopting the eſſential articles of natural religion, which lay for beyond the reach of their diſcovery, and were originally revealed to them by the bleſſed *Jeſus*; and judging thoſe articles ſufficient to all the purpoſes of happineſs, are pleaſed to reject all the other articles of the inſtitution of *Jeſus*, tho' revealed and enjoyed by the ſame authority, and plainly ſubſidiary to the religion of Nature; and to count the religion of *Jeſus* an impoſture? *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe!*

Theſe our modern Reformers, ſo zealous to aboliſh Chriſtianity, and to introduce (for I ſpeak

ſpeak not here of Atheiſts and Sceptics) the religion of Nature, as the only religion fitted to the nature of man, and which alone mankind ought to profeſs; do not ſeem to be altogether ſo well qualified for their undertaking; they do not conſider things as they are adapted to rational creatures in different circumſtances.

By the acknowledgement of the Heathen, human minds were not always in their preſent depraved ſituation. If therefore we conſider mankind in their original ſtate, a ſtate of innocence and integrity, having their minds enlightened with all neceſſary knowledge, and all the powers of human nature duly balanced and adjuſted, ſo that reaſon governs, and all the paſſions are obedient: As one may now eaſily apprehend the religion of Nature, that is ſuited to creatures thus in ſociety, or in perfect friendſhip with God, and with one another; ſo one may judge it manifeſt, that this primary religion, founded in the original nature and ſtate of things, is, of itſelf, without any foreign aid, fully ſufficient to their happineſs.

But, if we conſider mankind in a different light, void of innocence and integrity, guilty and unrighteous, deſtitute of ſpiritual knowledge, in groſs darkneſs and ignorance, having the balance of their conſtitution quite broken and diſordered; ſo that reaſon has loſt its authority, and is now only ſubſervient to

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the prevalency of paſſion: Here the moral world is greatly altered, and a new ſet of relations is introduced: Mankind have revolted; they are in a ſtate of enmity with God, and are far from being friendly to one another.

No longer therefore can the primary religion of Nature ſuit the circumſtances, and, of itſelf, anſwer the happineſs of miſerable mankind. Of neceſſity, if we are not irreverſibly doomed to deſtruction, the gracious Governor of the world muſt frame ſome new plan or ſcheme, whereby to reduce his rebellious ſubjects, and to recover them to thoſe moral diſpoſitions, that may in ſome meaſure fit them for his mercy and favour, and for the enjoyment of happineſs. No doubt, the primary religion of Nature is, in all events, the only immediate foundation of rational happineſs; nor can any religious inſtitution, where this is not an eſſential or the main ingredient, be conceived to come from God. But, I ſay, in the preſent circumſtances of mankind, wherein things are changed from their original conſtitution, and new relations have ſupervened; ſome adventitious terms muſt be propounded by the great Ruler of the univerſe, to be religiouſly obſerved by mankind, anſwering to that change, and to thoſe new relations; and ſubſidiary to the primary religion of Nature, the immediate and the laſting

ing ſpring of happineſs. The only adventitious term which the Deiſts, I mean thoſe who confeſs the eſſential articles of natural religion, will, I ſuppoſe, here admit of, is repentance, a change of heart and life, or a returning to God and our duty. But, if the ſound of the word does not frighten them out of their ſenſe and reaſon, muſt they not admit likewiſe of faith, as another adventitious term; I mean *Faith in the mercy of God*, as it concerns the pardoning of ſinners, and the receiving them into favour, upon their *ceaſing to do evil and their learning to do well?* In the nature of things, it is impoſſible for any man to repent without the hopes of mercy, or of God's being merciful to him in particular. So that our rational Deiſts, who ſet up to inſtruct mankind in matters of religion, muſt be *Preachers both of faith and of repentance*, and therein, in general, come ſo far to agree with Chriſtians.

But as faith and repentance do not belong to the primary religion of Nature, but are adventitious terms or articles, ariſing from the change of circumſtances and relations between God and man, and that become our duty upon our apprehending that God is gracious and merciful; the great queſtion is, Will God extend this his grace and mercy to all kinds of ſins, how hainous and daring ſoever; to any whatever number of ſins; or to a long continued courſe of ſinning; or will he extend it

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to the rebellious race of mankind, without any atonement or ſacrifice? Such Deiſts as have any hopes of mercy, muſt, without doubt or ſcruple, reſolve all ſuch queſtions in the affirmative. But, for my part (conſcious of no biaſs in reference to ſuch queſtions, I am ſure I have none) I moſt ſincerely declare, that to determine them *a priori*, or from the bare contemplation of the perfections of God, appears to me impoſſible. Nor am I able to conceive, how any man, from his own knowledge of things, can be confident, that the ſovereign Lord of the univerſe muſt or will certainly purſue ſuch particular meaſures, in the caſe of a whole ſyſtem of rational creatures their having revolted or rebelled againſt him. I incline to think, that the all-comprehenſive ſovereign Mind having the whole univerſe in one view, is alone capable of judging what are the meaſures, upon ſo important an event, the moſt proper, and the beſt adapted to the reducing of his rebel-ſubjects, and to the eſtabliſhing of the reſt of his creation. Sure I am, that the evidence we have for the Chriſtian Revelation is infinitely ſtronger, than any evidence the Deiſts can pretend to have for their ſolution of the above queſtions. In particular, if it is ſo obvious to the human mind, that no atonement or ſacrifice is neceſſary to the expiating of ſin, it is the moſt ſurpriſing thing imaginable, not only how mankind came ſo univerſally to conceive a prevailing ſenſe to

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the contrary, but how the notion of a ſacrifice, as a piece of ſervice acceptable to God, and of conſequence to the guilty perſons, came ever to enter into the mind of man. To make ſuch an inſtitution as that of ſacrifices a human contrivance (or to lay it to the charge of Prieſt-craft, eſpecially as the firſt Prieſts were the fathers of families, and in virtue of their paternal character, officiating only within their own families, had no ſeparate intereſt to biaſs them) can, in my apprehenſion, be juſtified by no plauſible reaſon whatſoever. But I mention theſe things only by the way. What I here mean is to lead our Free-thinkers to reflect, that if they do really intend to promote the intereſt of natural religion, they can no where meet with better aſſiſtance, with more powerful aids, than from the Goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

It is agreed, that the being and perfections of God, the immortality of human ſouls, and a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, are the great fundamental principles of natural religion. Now, upon theſe very principles, the Goſpel of our Lord is intirely grounded. Nay, ſo peculiar are theſe principles to the Chriſtian Inſtitution, that from hence, as in fact it is moſt apparent, they were derived and propagated all over the Heathen world. And what is the particular relating to any of theſe principles, ſo far as they concern the moral

ral conduct of mankind, wherein the Gospel can be judged defective or erroneous.

We are there taught, that as God did at first frame and create the universe, all things in heaven and in earth; so, being every where present, he upholds all things by the word of his power, and in his providence governs all things according to his wisdom and goodness; that he observes all the actions of his rational creatures, even those that pass in the inmost recesses of the soul; that he is of spotless purity, infinitely holy, delighting in the purity and rectitude of his rational creatures, whose obedience and goodness he will reward to eternity; hating sin and every moral turpitude, which he cannot but punish for ever. Such are the notions we have concerning God from the Gospel of our Lord. And therein likewise we are assured, that what changes soever may happen to the body, the soul is immortal, and our existence shall never come to a period. So that having concluded our state of trial in this world, we shall be disposed of in the other world, in happiness or misery *according to the deeds done in the body*, as we have maintained or forfeited our innocence and integrity, or have cultivated or neglected, or have improved or corrupted the moral dispositions of the mind. Thus, I say, from the Gospel of our Lord, we come to understand the fundamental principles of natural religion. And from hence also

we learn, what are the particular duties incumbent upon us, as they ariſe from the nature of God and of man, or from the relations we bear to God and to one another.

There we are told, that God, not confined to place, fills the heavens and the earth with his preſence; that he is infinite in all perfections, of almighty power, unbounded wiſdom, and over-flowing goodneſs, tenderly concerned for the happineſs of all his creatures; our great Creator and preſerver, *in whom we live, and move, and have our being*; our beſt and greateſt benefactor, *from whom every good and perfect gift cometh down*: and the bountiful never-failing rewarder of all that love and obey him. And anſwerably to this character and to theſe relations, it is our bounden duty to admire and adore this great Being; to acknowledge our whole dependence is upon him; to employ our bodies and ſouls, his workmanſhip and property, faithfully in his ſervice; to praiſe and thank him for the numberleſs bleſſings he beſtows on us, and has laid up in ſtore for us; and to uſe all the gifts of his providence, in the manner, and to the purpoſes, he directs: In a word, it is our bounden duty, to have God in all our thoughts, to imitate him the great Parent of mankind, or *to be perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

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But, in the Goſpel of our Lord, we are further taught, that as we are all the creatures of God, *who giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;* ſo *he hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth.* Here then we are given to underſtand, that the whole human race is but one large family under the protection and government of one ſovereign Lord, the common Parent of all. As therefore all mankind thus naturally knit together by the endearing bonds of blood and kindred, make up only one body, and we are all members one of another, it is eaſy to obſerve, that to this conſtitution of things, nothing can be more eſſential or natural, than a common ſpirit animating the whole community, or inſpiring all the individuals of the ſame body, with the ſame care one for another, and thereby uniting them in their joint endeavours to promote their common good and happineſs. So that here we ſee all human kind naturally aſſociated together, all enlivened by the ſame ſpirit, and under the ſovereign law of univerſal benevolence, wherein every thing virtuous is included, all acting in their intercourſe with one another, every man for the good of his neighbour: From whence muſt ariſe univerſal peace, joy and comfort. And as we thus behold all mankind united to God, our great Head and the common Parent of the univerſe, in all the acts of piety and devotion, obeying and imitating this great Being, or *loving*

ving the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our ſoul, and with all our mind; and, at the ſame time, being the members of one common body, conſpiring together in our mutual endeavours to advance each other's happineſs, *every man loving his neighbour as himſelf*; ſo it is to be conſidered, that in this conſtitution of things, every man, placing his higheſt pleaſure in promoting the glory of God, and the good of mankind, will ſo preſerve the inward balance of his nature, as to be always diſpoſed and ready to attend to theſe purpoſes. To all which it muſt be added, that in the diſcharge of every branch of our duty, every man is powerfully inſpirited, not only from the high delights that ariſe from the chearful exerciſe of univerſal love and benevolence, and from the applauſes of our fellow men; but from the aſſured hopes of the continuance of the favour and protection of God, and of our coming in the end to a glorious immortality.

This, in my apprehenſion, is the primary religion of Nature, which we learn from the Goſpel of our Lord, and given to man in his primary conſtitution, when in a ſtate of integrity, it would be abſurd and impertinent to imagine, it contains articles concerning faith and repentance. It relates only to creatures of loyal diſpoſitions, that have not renounced their allegiance, and revolted againſt God. It is of infinite value, and of the laſt conſequence to the happineſs of mankind in God, and in one another: And

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ſo it is eſteemed in the Chriſtian Revelation, where it is preferred before every thing elſe, where we are commanded to be *perfecting holineſs in the fear of God*, where every man is rated in proportion to the degrees of this perfection he has acquired, and where we are told expreſsly, that *without charity*, wherein is comprehended the whole of natural religion, all other endowments, whereby people can be diſtinguiſhed, are wholly inſignificant. And thus far, I hope, our modern Free-thinkers will regard the Goſpel of our Lord with a friendly eye, and judge it no enemy to the mighty concern they profeſs for the good of mankind. They will undoubtedly conſider it as a powerful aſſiſtant in laying the foundation, and eſtabliſhing the noble plan of univerſal happineſs.

But, with this primary religion of Nature, if we compare the manners, the cuſtoms, and habits of mankind every where prevalent, where do we ſee the agreement? how wide is the difference? The unconformity and contradictions are univerſally apparent. Conſider the human race in all ages, and all over the inhabited earth; where is the nation; where is the family; where is the ſingle perſon, that comes up to this ſtandard, and is thereby uniformly and ſteadily governed? The hiſtory of the world, even that part of it that is the moſt renowned, and what people moſtly admire, is little elſe but the hiſtory of the violations of the primary laws and religion of Nature. Nay, comparing this primary religion

ligion with the preſent conſtitution of human nature, it appears inconteſtable, in fact, I do not ſay in ſpeculation, that the rational powers of mankind are not proportioned, either to the knowledge, or to the practice of natural religion.

I confeſs, the learned *Pocock* in his *Philoſophus Autodidactus*, repreſents a man, when left to himſelf, and having no inſtructor whatſoever, to think and argue with great penetration and acuteneſs upon the *Carteſian* principles, and to find out both the nature of the ſoul, and the being and perfections of God. And, doubtleſs, every Philoſopher having the ſame good opinion of human powers, would, upon his own particular principles, repreſent a man, in the exerciſe of his own natural unaſſiſted faculties, growing up of himſelf to be as learned and knowing with reſpect to the ſame articles. But, ſtepping out of this ideal world of our own framing, into that wherein we meet with facts, or with mankind exerting their natural powers, our experience is far from anſwering our ſpeculation; ſo far from anſwering it, that the human mind is found every where overwhelmed in thick darkneſs, through which it is not able to penetrate, and to reach the knowledge of the true God, neceſſary to the being of natural religion. But this queſtion I have elſewhere fully explained. And, in *Cicero's* firſt book *concerning the Nature of the Gods*, where he gives us an account of the different ſentiments of Philoſophers in relation to the Deity, every man muſt obſerve the

the groſs ignorance wherein all Philoſophers were involved, and that *from the wiſdom of God manifeſted in the works of creation and providence, the world by all their wiſdom*, all their learning and philoſophy, *were not able to diſcern and know God.* How then can the inward powers of human nature, in its preſent ſituation, be judged proportioned to the knowledge of the religion of Nature?

And no better, I dare venture to affirm, are they proportioned to the practice. No Deiſt, I am apt to think, will pretend to point out any perfect character in life. The beſt of men have their own moral defects and weakneſſes; and what the reſt of mankind are, I need not ſay. In fact, nothing can be more certain than that *in many things we offend all*, and that *there is not a juſt man upon earth that doeth good and ſinneth not.* To alledge therefore that human powers are equal to the obſervance of the laws, or of the religion of Nature, without our being able to inſtance in one perfect character that comes up to this ſtandard, ſeems to be a vain conceit, an opinion wholly groundleſs and viſionary. And, indeed, if we attend to human nature, at its firſt appearance in the caſe of children, one cannot but perceive how greatly diſproportioned it is to the practice of natural religion. It matters not whether we imagine children capable of reaſon, or of being under a law; we ſee them exerting moſt of the paſſions of human nature, which in manhood

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are the ſprings of human actions. Thus in the firſt movements of our nature, as children come to be capable of diſtinguiſhing ſenſible objects, they very often diſcover anger, revenge, pride, envy, avarice, and other ſuch malevolent paſſions. And are not all ſuch paſſions proof ſufficient, that human nature, in its native frame, or as it now comes into the world, is by no means formed to the practice of natural religion? Beyond queſtion, as theſe paſſions prevent our reaſon, and prevail in the mind without any ſuperior power to limit and direct them, our firſt appearance upon the ſtage as rational creatures, muſt be in a moral character, directly contrary to the religion of Nature. In ſhort, ſuch is our preſent unhappy ſituation, that when the ſeaſon of our reaſon is approaching, it ſhoots out weakly, it proceeds by ſlow advances, and is long of coming to any degree of maturity; whilſt our paſſions all the while continue vigorous, and are gathering ſtrength daily. So that to acquire the maſtery of one's paſſions, or to reduce them under the government of reaſon, muſt prove a laborious work, which few men will ſubmit to: Nor any where in the world is any man to be found, who has brought his paſſions under ſuch diſcipline, as in all inſtances to be intirely ſubject to the religion of Nature. Nay, in the preſent frame of our nature, ſo untowardly are we ſituated, that the very ſetting of bounds to our paſſions, excites

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their violence; a ſtrange perverſeneſs ſenſibly felt in all ages:

Ruimus in vetitum, ferimur, cupimuſque negata.

All this, in common experience, is the real truth of things. And as all mankind are thus ſinful and guilty before God, ſunk in ignorance and corruption, with their rational powers ſo broken and diſordered, that they are quite unequal to the knowledge and practice of natural religion; What courſe can our Free-thinkers, theſe our modern religious projectors, propoſe to take, in order to reclaim the world, and to eſtabliſh among us the religion of Nature? Muſt they not inſtruct us in the knowledge of the fundamental articles of all religion, the being and perfections of God, the immortality of human ſouls, and a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments? Muſt they not convince us of our having revolted from the religion of Nature, and become liable to puniſhment? Muſt they not aſſure us, that God is ſo far reconciled to rebellious mankind, that he offers an indemnity to all that will return to their allegiance? And upon this, muſt they not preach bothfaith and repentance, and encourage us to lay down the weapons of our rebellion, and to ſubmit our hearts and lives to the government of God; for that we may reſt confident, that, upon our thus returning to our duty, God will not only ſhew us mercy in the forgiveneſs of our paſt

offences, but for the future will continue by his grace to heal and ſtrengthen the broken powers of our nature; and if we perſevere in acquiring ſtill higher degrees of goodneſs and righteouſneſs, will reward us eternally? I ſay, if our modern Free-thinkers do really mean to ſerve mankind in their higheſt concernments, and would endeavour by all means poſſible to relieve them from impiety and vice, and the miſery and ruin that attend them in both worlds, and to recover them to piety and virtue, and the comfort and happineſs they afford us in time, and fit us to enjoy to eternity; where can they have their endeavours more powerfully ſeconded than by the religion of the bleſſed *Jeſus*, an inſtitution expreſsly intended *to put an end to ſin, and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs?* Here we have the knowledge of all the eſſential principles of natural religion: And here all mankind are given to underſtand that they are alienated from the life of God, walking in the vanity of their mind, and are therefore obnoxious to his righteous judgments: Here it is, that in the plaineſt, the ſtrongeſt, and the moſt moving terms, every penitent ſinner is aſſured of mercy at the hands of God: And here faith and repentance are taught us as indiſpenſably neceſſary to the pardon of ſin: Here we are inſtructed in the whole of our moral conduct, and in following the inſtructions given us, *we become holy as God is holy:* Here by the moſt perſuaſive arguments

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we are encouraged to reſt aſſured, that upon addreſſing ourſelves to our heavenly Father, he will grant us the influences of his grace and ſpirit, to help our weakneſs, and to ſupport us in the diſcharge of our duty: Here likewiſe we are animated in the purſuit of all goodneſs, by the moſt prevalent motives, the glorious hopes of a happy immortality, when, upon our having here *perfected holineſs in the fear of God*, we ſhall be taken up into his heavenly manſions: And is it not owing to the Goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt*, that every where thro' the Chriſtian world, in towns, and villages, and all over the country, churches, or, as one may juſtly call them, public ſchools, are erected, wherein public teachers are employed to train up mankind, without diſtinction, in the knowledge of their duty, and to perſuade them to the love and practice of all righteouſneſs? An inſtitution of infinite moment, one would think, in the moral world; and the happy conſequence is, a Chriſtian Plowman, with reſpect to the fundamental articles of religion, is far more knowing and intelligent than any Heathen Philoſopher. From whence then can ſuch of our Deiſts, as do really mean to promote the higheſt happineſs of human creatures, be furniſhed with better aſſiſtance, than from the Goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt?* And what can one imagine is the reaſon why they make not uſe of this aſſiſtance, which they have every where at hand?

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Their great end, in the mighty change they would bring about in matters of religion, coincides with that of the Chriſtian inſtitution; they pretend the good and well-being of human ſociety, the peace and comfort of human minds here, and their laſting happineſs hereafter: And, for the compaſſing of this end, if they would properly engage in the execution, the great means to be employed, are faith and repentance; and theſe likewiſe are the means which the Chriſtian inſtitution recommends to us as of the laſt neceſſity. As therefore both the end and the means propoſed and purſued by the Chriſtian inſtitution, are the ſame with thoſe of our modern Free-thinkers, who, I here ſuppoſe, are zealouſly concerned for the religious improvement of mankind; upon what good reaſon can they juſtify their neglect and contempt of the religion of *Jeſus?* There are indeed ſome circumſtances relating particularly to the means, wherein Chriſtians and Deiſts do differ widely from one another. In the Chriſtian inſtitution we are inſtructed, that it is thro' the merits and mediation of *Jeſus Chriſt*, that our faith and repentance are accepted and available with God for the pardon of our ſins, for our being re-inſtated in his favour, and our partaking of his happineſs: But, on the other hand, our Free-thinkers loudly affirm, that faith and repentance are, of themſelves, without regarding the merits and mediation of *Chriſt*, fully ſufficient to all the purpoſes of pardon, and favour

and

and happineſs. But as this circumſtance in the Chriſtian ſcheme does in no degree alter the nature of faith and repentance, and the merits and mediation of *Chriſt* are efficacious to no man whatſoever, without a ſincere faith and thorough repentance, more thorough, perhaps, and univerſal, than moſt of our Deiſts may judge neceſſary; it is amazing how theſe Gentlemen, upon this circumſtance, have come to reject an inſtitution, which, in the whole of its contexture, is altogether ſo friendly to the cauſe of piety and virtue, and whoſe main plot is to eſtabliſh the happineſs of man in the reſtoration of natural religion. For my part, were I a Deiſt, and had all the prevailing concern, which ſome of that ſect pretend to have, for the moral good and happineſs of mankind, ſo far would I be from pouring contempt upon the religion of *Jeſus*, that without meddling with its peculiarities, I would, methinks, gladly embrace its aſſiſtance, and urge Chriſtians with the abſolute neceſſity of repentance and univerſal holineſs, or of *denying all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and living ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly*; I would upbraid them with the looſeneſs, the immorality and impiety of their lives, ſhamefully repugnant to the precepts of the Goſpel, and ſcandalouſly reproachful to their holy profeſſion; I would watchfully attend to the uſe they make of the peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity, and if in any meaſure they abuſed them, to the prejudice of the ſtricteſt virtue, I would

would make them ſenſible that *Chriſt is not the miniſter of ſin;* I would openly expoſe the vanity of their hopes of being hereafter taken up into heaven as the heirs of glory, whilſt here upon earth they live the ſlaves and ſervants of ſin, *in the luſt of the eye, the luſt of the fleſh, and the pride of life, working iniquity with greedineſs.* In particular, if any bearing the name of *Chriſt* are ſo impious and unchriſtian as to perſecute others for what concerns conſcience or matters of religion, here I would raiſe my voice and call aloud, *Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of: For the Son of man is come not to deſtroy men's lives, but to ſave them.* After this manner, I ſay, were I a Deiſt, concerned for the moral happineſs of mankind, I would ſerve myſelf of the religion of *Jeſus*, and improve it to the account, to the ſupport and advancement of the religion of Nature. And as, in ſuch a courſe our Free-thinkers, ſince they muſt favour the world with their religious productions, might find employment enough for their pens, ſo therein they would come to be great bleſſings to mankind, infinitely more beneficial, than they ſeem to be in venting their ſpleen againſt the truth of the Chriſtian Revelation, wherein, I cannot but ſay with vaſt regret, they are infinitely hurtful to natural religion.

But poſſibly theſe Gentlemen are honeſter, and of more tender conſciences than not openly to condemn, by the whole, a religious inſtitution that

that contains in it only certain articles, which they are pleaſed not to approve of. And, I confeſs, they take great offence at the doctrine of the ſacrifice of *Chriſt* offered up to God for the ſins of the world, which they ſcruple not loudly to proclaim, a doctrine abſurd in it ſelf, and miſchievous in its conſequences. But, as I hinted before, are any of theſe Gentlemen able to demonſtrate *a priori*, or from the nature of things, that ſuch an inſtitution is unworthy of God, and repugnant to the perfections of his nature; or that the wiſdom and mercy of God (in a conſiſtency with the intereſt of his univerſal government, comprehended only by an infinite mind) can be exerted in proclaiming an indemnity to ſinful mankind in what we call a free and gratuitous manner, without the intervention of a ſacrifice on the part of the guilty? I frankly acknowledge, ſuch a demonſtration is far beyond my abilities, nor have I yet ſeen it performed by any man. And upon a metaphyſical problem impoſſible to be ſolved, how does it ſtand to reaſon, to reject the Goſpel of *Jeſus*, which, for the truth of its divinity, appeals to matters of fact? But how far ſoever it may be out of one's power to demonſtrate *a priori*, that the great Sovereign of the world, before a general indemnity can be proclaimed to the rebellious race of mankind, muſt have an atonement, or a ſacrifice of general efficacy, or whoſe merits may extend to the whole: Yet when we are aſſured, that God

has

has been pleaſed to provide ſuch a ſacrifice in the voluntary death of *Jeſus* upon the croſs, every free-thinking conſiderate man will come to obſerve, that ſuch an inſtitution is calculated to ſerve the beſt and the wiſeſt purpoſes; in particular, that it is a conſtant awful warning to ſinners, that if they perſiſt in the evil of their ways, *ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures*, it is impoſſible they can eſcape puniſhment; *for to that man who ſinneth wilfully after that he hath received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the adverſaries*, Heb. x. 26, 27. And, on the other hand, that it is a ſtanding gracious aſſurance to penitent ſinners, that, if they perſiſt in their duty and obedience, God will not only forgive them their ſins, but will bleſs and enrich them with every good and perfect gift; for *he that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. So that the ſacrifice of *Chriſt* is a ſenſible repreſentation, which attended to (and every Chriſtian is bound always or habitually to attend to it, and often in a ſolemn manner to commemorate the wonderful event) muſt powerfully and ſteadily operate both upon our fears and our hopes the great ſprings of human actions. A wiſe and gracious conſtitution! For tho' ſome people pretend, that from ſpeculation, or abſtract reaſoning, they are ſufficiently

ſufficiently appriſed, that wicked men ſhall be puniſhed, and good men ſhall be rewarded; yet theſe truths, ſupported by reaſon, and at the ſame time ſet forth to us in the ſtrongeſt light that can affect our imagination, muſt, by this means, make the deeper impreſſions upon the mind; and therefore come to be the more certain and ſucceſsful in producing their proper effects. This, every body will own, is likely to be the caſe with reſpect to the bulk of mankind, not much given to ſpeculation. And as all our other faculties, as well as our reaſon, ought to contribute their aſſiſtance in improving our religious diſpoſitions, even our Philoſophers will be nothing the worſe for having ſuch an addreſs made to their imagination.

It is however alledged, that this ſacrifice of *Chriſt*, his obedience or righteouſneſs, and his purchaſing for us mercy and forgiveneſs, and an inheritance in heaven, are doctrines that altogether ſuperſede, or greatly extenuate the concern we ought to have for perſonal righteouſneſs. And were theſe the neceſſary or natural conſequences of theſe doctrines, as ſuch doctrines can never poſſibly come from God, I here openly avow, I would renounce them; which is the plain language of every true Chriſtian. But ſo far are thoſe doctrines, as they are taught us in the Goſpel, from having any ſuch pernicious influence over our moral conduct, that, on the contrary, no doctrines can be better calculated to prevail with human minds, as they

are now ſituated, to renounce every fooliſh and hurtful luſt, and to devote themſelves to the love and practice of all goodneſs and righteouſneſs. The caſe is commonly illuſtrated after this manner: "The Kings ſon, a Prince of an "illuſtrious character, having, by a ſeries of "noble actions, acquired laſting proſperity and "a mighty acceſſion of glory to the nation, "has raiſed himſelf to a high degree of merit "with the Sovereign. As therefore a parti- "cular province of his father's vaſt dominions "have revolted, and by their rebellion have "expoſed themſelves to certain deſtruction, "the Prince is pleaſed to interpoſe in their "favour; and, in recompenſe or acknowledge- "ment of his merit, obtains a merciful grant, "that the deſtruction due to thoſe rebels ſhall, "for ſuch a certain limited time, be ſuſpended; "that, in the mean while, a general indemnity "ſhall be publiſhed, and that all aſſurances "ſhall be given to every individual, that whoever "ſhall lay down their arms, and return to their "allegiance and duty, ſhall not only meet with "pardon and mercy, but be re-eſtabliſhed in "all the privileges and bleſſings of the moſt "faithful ſubjects." This, I ſay, may in ſome ſort repreſent the nature and tendency of theſe doctrines of the Goſpel, which our Infidels alledge, do prevent our being concerned for any inherent perſonal righteouſneſs. And as no man in his right ſenſes, can imagine that this interceſſion of the Prince, and his laying out his

his merits with his father, in purchaſing an indemnity for his rebellious ſubjects, and their being taken into favour, upon their returning to their duty within a limited time, is an encouragement for thoſe rebels to perſiſt in their rebellion, and to abandon all thoughts of ever becoming dutiful and loyal; ſo nothing but groſs ignorance, I beg leave to ſay, or a malicious miſrepreſentation of the doctrines of the Goſpel concerning the ſacrifice of *Chriſt*, *&c.* can betray one into an opinion, that thoſe doctrines pervert the moral diſpoſitions of mankind, prevent an apprehenſion of the neceſſity of holineſs, or render us careleſs and indifferent as to the inward rectitude and integrity of our nature. No one doctrine of the Chriſtian inſtitution do I know, of ſuch michievous tendency, or that our Deiſts have the leaſt reaſon to ſuſpect of a bad influence on morality. Nor in all Revelation is there the ſmalleſt appearance of any thing ſubſtituted in the room of truth and moral righteouſneſs, that can intitle us to any ſhare in the purchaſe of our Saviour: Every article and every ſentence declare the contrary. Our Infidels, therefore, vainly conceiting they have ruined the credit of the Goſpel, and meaning to inform mankind of the mighty ſervice they have therein done them, do very injudiciouſly and very fooliſhly make theſe reflections: "When men, ſay they, "know they are to have nothing but what "they work for, when they are aſſured they "are

" are not born to an eſtate in the kingdom of " heaven of another's purchaſing, they will not " idly live in the faith of it, but go to work, " and endeavour their outmoſt to work out " their own ſalvation with care and diligence. " And this Treatiſe, ſays the Author, having " expoſed Chriſtianity, will prove of real ſervice " to religion, and make men's practices better; " when they ſhall find they have nothing elſe " to depend on for happineſs here and here- " after, but their own perſonal righteouſneſs, " with their love of wiſdom and truth *." Such reflections, as they bear in them a notoriouſly falſe imputation on the Goſpel of *Jeſus*, can come from no mind that is not blinded by the ſtrongeſt prejudices. Nor in the caſe of thoſe Deiſts who profeſs a concern for the religion of Nature, can I impute to any other cauſe what I always thought matter of wonder, their not taking the aſſiſtance of the Chriſtian Revelation, but endeavouring to bring it into univerſal contempt.

Moſt certain it is, that the peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity relating to *Jeſus Chriſt, who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works*, are ſo far from abating the indiſpenſible neceſſity of our own perſonal righteouſneſs, that they greatly improve and augment it. However, if thoſe Gentlemen

* The Reſurrection of Jeſus conſidered, in anſwer to the Trial of the Witneſs. p. 83.

cannot

cannot change their opinion, but muſt ſtill think, that ſuch doctrines, as the ſacrifice of Chriſt, his merits, and purchaſe, are ſufficient objections to the truth of the Goſpel, herein they muſt ſtand or fall to their own maſter. But, if they apprehend, that thoſe doctrines may be ſo managed as to prove a bar to virtue and an encouragement to vice; in this caſe, I would preſume to adviſe them to watch over the conduct of thoſe treacherous Chriſtians, thoſe falſe Teachers, that would pervert thoſe doctrines to ſuch purpoſes, and bring in damnable hereſies; they cannot uſe them with ſeverity enough, or ſufficiently expoſe them to the contempt of mankind; and they may well tell them, as *Julian* did the Chriſtians of his time, with reſpect to perſecution, that "they were not ſo taught "neither by *Jeſus* nor by *Paul.*" This I would reckon wiſe and prudent, and highly conſiſtent with the concern they expreſs for the cauſe of virtue; but the attempting to aboliſh Chriſtianity is mad and extravagant. The religion of Nature is the morality of the religion of *Jeſus*, to which the Goſpel propoſes to exalt human nature, and which it eſteems at ſuch a rate, or of ſuch high moment and importance, that all its other doctrines are made ſubſervient to its advancement, till *we ſhall eſcape the pollutions of this world, and become holy as God is holy*. And as they are thus intimately connected together, how can the Goſpel or the religion of *Jeſus* ſuffer, without its morality likewiſe

likewiſe ſuffering? One ſhould think, that to pour contempt upon the whole, is to ſhed reproach upon the parts, thoſe eſpecially that are the eſſential ingredients. So that the ſucceſs of the attempt to ruin the religion of *Jeſus* would, at the ſame time, infallibly ruin the religion of Nature, and come in time to reduce the world into that diſmal ſtate of idolatry and ſuperſtition, wherein mankind, before the Chriſtian Revelation, had been for many ages ſunk and overwhelmed.

But our modern Infidels do not attack the religion of Nature by conſequence only; they attack it directly, in attempting to diſcredit the morality of the religion of *Jeſus*, whoſe moral doctrines and precepts, they would perſuade the world, are in ſome articles uſeleſs, in others fooliſh and abſurd, and in others hurtful and miſchievous. But having ſhown, particularly, *Sect.* VIII. how very groundleſs ſuch imputations are, I ſhall here only remark, that as the filling people's heads with prejudices againſt the morality of the religion of *Jeſus*, cannot fail to alienate people's minds from every branch of the Chriſtian inſtitution, and in particular, muſt prevent their aſpiring to that perfection of piety and virtue, of univerſal goodneſs and righteouſneſs, which the Goſpel commands us to purſue, as abſolutely neceſſary to our compleat and laſting felicity; ſo, of courſe, it baſely flatters the looſe, vicious propenſions of human nature, and betrays the world into

mean

mean trifling purſuits, into a licentiouſneſs of manners, highly offenſive to natural religion, and infinitely miſchievous to mankind. In my apprehenſion, therefore, our free-thinking Gentlemen, in their oppoſition to the religion of *Jeſus*, pretend what they will, are acting a part far from being friendly to the religion of Nature, far from being beneficial to the rational world.

I know there are ſome Deiſts who, although they laugh at all Revelation, yet judging a public religion neceſſary, are contented with the Chriſtian, and, as they affect to ſpeak, ſuffer- "ing its votaries quietly to triumph in the ſuppo- "ſed goodneſs of their cauſe," do condemn the making any open attempt to diſcredit or ruin it. And ſo far, perhaps, one may venture to applaud the prudence and moderation of thoſe Gentleen. But, if one might follow them into their retirements, I would be guilty of a little intruſion, in order to prevail with them to obſerve a conſiſtency and uniformity of conduct; and not to act the ſecret enemy, or to uſe their endeavours in private, to inſpire people's minds, eſpecially thoſe of the younger ſort, with an averſion and contempt of that religion, which they approve of as neceſſary to the public intereſt. Such an approbation, or their being contented with the Chriſtian inſtitution as fit to be publicly eſtabliſhed, and their condemning every open attempt to reproach it, is, one cannot but think, ſufficient evidence, that in that

inſtitution

inſtitution they find no article hurtful to ſociety; I ſhould rather ſay, that all its doctrines and precepts, all its rewards and puniſhments, are uſeful and beneficial, and of conſequence to promote peace, and order, and happineſs among mankind: For to what other purpoſes can a public religion be judged neceſſary? And indeed every man that thinks freely will ingenuouſly confeſs, that ſuch is the real character of the religion of *Jeſus*: For therein *the grace of God that bringeth ſalvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts we ſhould live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt: Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory, honour, and immortality; eternal life: But to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs; indignation and wrath: Tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew firſt, and alſo of the Gentile: But glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew firſt, and alſo to the Gentile: For there is no reſpect of perſons with God*, Tit. ii. 11. Rom. ii. 6. That religion, ſurely, well deſerves and is highly fit to be publicly eſtabliſhed, wherein we have ſuch commands laid upon us to be univerſally regarded: *Finally, Brethren, whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever*

ſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things, Philip. iv. 8. At which rate we ſhould be *filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs*, and *have the peace of God reigning among us*. And if the Chriſtian inſtitution be thus fit to be publicly eſtabliſhed; how come thoſe Gentlemen to alledge, that it is not fit to be privately entertained or regarded? Openly to approve of its being the public religion, and ſecretly to whiſper to the world about them, that it ought not to be private or perſonal, is not only mean and treacherous, but fooliſh and prepoſterous, it prevents all the good effects of a public eſtabliſhment, it ſerves to render men Hypocrites or Atheiſts, and muſt deſtroy all the confidence that one man can have in another upon religious principles: Nor can it well be thought, that the man who deals doubly with God, will deal fairly by his neighbour. Thoſe Gentlemen, therefore, who judge a public religion neceſſary to the peace and order of the world, and that to this purpoſe the Chriſtian religion is well enough adapted, and do nevertheleſs ſecretly endeavour to bring this religion into contempt, have got into a piece of conduct, that tends to the diſſolution and ruin of human ſociety.

But whilſt Gentlemen apprehend, that a public religion is neceſſary, and are ſo far ſatisfied with the Chriſtian, that they condemn every open attempt to ruin its credit, or impair its

authority, upon what good reaſon can they juſtify their ſecretly endeavouring to fill people's minds with prejudices againſt it, or to miſrepreſent it as an object of contempt and averſion? A ſtrange management this; they publicly profeſs the community have done well in eſtabliſhing it; and underhand they would perſuade all the individuals of the community to deſpiſe it! But, I ſay, by what good reaſon are they able to juſtify their ſecret attempts in alienating people's minds from the Chriſtian inſtitution; ſo that, let the herd of mankind chuſe what they will, it muſt not be entertained by any Gentleman as a private or perſonal religion? Does it debaſe our notions of the majeſty, the nature and perfections of God, or of the worſhip and adoration due to him? Why, they tell us, that it ſets up a partner or rival to God, in the perſon of his Son. But herein they betray their ignorance. The Goſpel teacheth us, that the Son is indeed *the brightneſs of his Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon*, not however the partner or rival of the Father, but his miniſter whom he employed in the creation of the univerſe, and in the redemption and reſtauration of ſinful mankind; whom he ſtill employs in the government of the world; and whom at the laſt day he will employ in judging the quick and the dead: At which grand and awful period, *the Son ſhall put down all rule, and all authority and power, and deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; and be ſubject*

ſubject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28. And in which of theſe articles is any man able to diſcern a ſhadow of rivalſhip? Or, does the Chriſtian inſtitution deprave our ſentiments concerning moral goodneſs and righteouſneſs, ſo as to prevent our acting our part as it becomes us, in the various conditions and relations of life? Were this the caſe, thoſe Gentlemen act a laudable part in guarding mankind againſt it. But wherein does it ſpoil the man, the the huſband or the wife, the parent or the child, the maſter or the ſervant, the magiſtrate or the ſubject, the ſeller or the buyer, the neighbour, the friend, the enemy, or any other character whatſoever, whether civil or religious? As therefore our Deiſts have no ſyſtem of rules, no ſet of motives, of rewards and puniſhments, better and more powerful, more manly and rational, more conducive and effectual to render us better men and better citizens, and to diſpoſe and prepare our minds for peace and comfort here, and joy and happineſs hereafter; what is it they can recommend to their diſciples of greater conſequence to mankind, in public or in private life, with reſpect to time, or to eternity? Is it in their power to ſhow us the excellency of their ſcheme, and the ſervice they are doing to mankind, in the reformation of the lives of their proſelytes, who *formerly living without God in the world, and ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures,* are now ſtrictly pious and virtuous?

virtuous? Or, can they ſhew us, that piety and virtue, every branch of goodneſs and righteouſneſs, and conſequently the happineſs of mankind in both worlds, are more ſecure upon their principles, than upon the principles of the Goſpel? For my part, let them conceit the light of Nature to be as full, and clear, and obvious as they pleaſe, I dare venture to affirm, that it propounds no reſtraints from irreligion and vice, no encouragements to piety and virtue, that come up to thoſe of the Chriſtian Revelation. How then can one avoid the concerning melancholy reflection, that thoſe Gentlemen, in attempting, whether ſecretly or openly, to diſcredit the religion of *Jeſus*, are ſadly corrupting the morals of mankind. They bereave people of the true light, and rob them of the ſuperior encouragements, and relieve them from the ſtronger reſtraints of Revelation, and putting them in their own hands, to follow any chance light that comes in their way, or to purſue the courſe of life which their own fancy may ſuggeſt to them, or which may happen to be in vogue and faſhionable, or to which the ſenſual propenſions of human nature may determine them; they ſet open the floodgates of folly and vanity, of irreligion and wickedneſs, wherein people are come to ſuch a height, that wholly devoted to their looſe unmanly pleaſures, to their trifling gaudy enjoyments, and having laid aſide all thought of futurity, they pride themſelves in ſhowing

a neglect or contempt of every thing ſerious or ſacred, *they glory in their ſhame.* So that all the open and ſecret attempts of our modern Free-thinkers, to break the credit of the religion of *Jeſus*, are, in my apprehenſion, ſo many wild efforts to baniſh out of the world all piety and virtue: A moſt unhappy concurrence with the preſent depraved ſtate of human nature, which, of itſelf, is abundantly *prone to commit iniquity with greedineſs.* Such remarks, I confeſs, are hard, and one has pain in making them: But the greateſt misfortune is, they are true and well founded, and as the beſt and wiſeſt laws, enforced by the ſtrongeſt and moſt powerful ſanctions, are not able to keep men within the bounds of their duty; every body will own, that a conſtitution of things leſs ſtrict and rigorous, or rather indulgent to human paſſions, muſt prove infinitely dangerous to piety and virtue: Nor, can thoſe perſons who reject the former, and propagate the latter, be counted friends to mankind.

But the great argument which, I ſuppoſe, thoſe Gentlemen employ, in order to prejudice the world about them, againſt the Chriſtian inſtitution, and whereof the unavoidable conſequence is a looſeneſs and extravagance of manners, is their aſſuring their diſciples, that the firſt publiſhers of the Goſpel were either Impoſtors or Enthuſiaſts. And how very groundleſs theſe imputations are, the Reader, I hope, will find clearly demonſtrated in the following

following Sections. Here I ſhall obſerve, that, as the Goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt* is a moral inſtitution, than which nothing poſſibly can be contrived more friendly to the cauſe of piety and virtue, to univerſal goodneſs and righteouſneſs, and to the comfort and happineſs of mankind, in all the various relations of life, and in every ſtage of our exiſtence, one is tempted to cry out, as old *Cato* does, with reſpect to the immortality of the ſoul, "If I am miſtaken in "believing the divinity of the Chriſtian Re- "velation, I gladly entertain the delightful "miſtake; and ſuch ſupport and comfort does "it afford me here in time, and ſuch joy and "happineſs does it promiſe me hereafter to "eternity, that whilſt I live no man ſhall rob me "of it." * And every ſincere Chriſtian, who forms his heart and life upon the precepts of the Goſpel, has good reaſon to aſſure our Infidels, that they act a cruel part in going about to deprive him of that *joy and peace he has in believing*.

As for the entertainment which the Reader may expect in the following Treatiſe, the general Heads of it are here laid before him in the Contents. And, as the whole is deſigned for the bulk of mankind, I flatter myſelf, that the

* Quod ſi in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales eſſe credam, lubenter erro: Nec mihi hunc errorem, quo delector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo. Sin mortuus (ut quidam minuti philoſophi cenſent) nihil ſentiam: non vereor, ne hunc errorem meum mortui philoſophi irrideant. Cic. de ſenect. cap. 23.

the particular explications are ſo full, ſo plain and obvious, that every common underſtanding may, without difficulty, perceive the truth of every branch of the argument; upon which, I would fain think, it may be found proper for the uſe of private families, who amidſt the confuſion that infidelity is like to introduce among us, would do well to furniſh themſelves with ſome plain eaſy Treatiſe, level to every common capacity, and clearly demonſtrating the truth of our holy religion. The reſurrection of *Jeſus* is, indeed, the capital point, on the truth of which depends the whole credit of Chriſtianity: And as I have had occaſion to conſider that article in different lights, in vindicating the hiſtory thereof from the charge of forgery and contradiction, in ſhewing that the Apoſtles could not poſſibly be therein guilty of any fraud or deceit, and in demonſtrating that in their belief of that wonderful event they were abſolutely free from enthuſiaſm; I am in hopes that, with reſpect to that article, I have given the Reader the fulleſt ſatisfaction. At the ſame time, if the Reader agrees to what I have explained and demonſtrated, *in my Inquiry into the Extent of Human Powers with reſpect to Matters of Religion*, namely, that mankind, left to themſelves, are not able to diſcover the eſſential articles of natural religion, and that thoſe articles, whereof we are now fully appriſed, have been, moſt certainly, ſupernaturally revealed, I could wiſh, that in the peruſal of the

the following Sheets, he would carry along with him thoſe ſentiments; as thereby, with the greater eaſe, he will clearly perceive the neceſſary connection, and the irreſiſtible force, with which the argument proceeds and concludes in favour of the Chriſtian Revelation. At any rate, the argument, in my apprehenſion, is beyond all reaſonable diſpute, and ſtands or falls with the common ſenſe of mankind.

CON-

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THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

SECT. I.

Wherein the truth or authenticity of the Hiſtory of the Goſpel is made out by the teſtimony of Heathen Writers.

BEFORE I enter upon the main argument, which I propoſe to handle in the following Treatiſe, ſince I am therein all along to appeal to the facts reported in the *New Teſtament* as certain and undoubted: It here ſeems neceſſary to ſatisfy the reader as to the evidence, upon which, in my apprehenſion, every impartial man muſt neceſſarily confeſs, *the hiſtory of the Goſpel is authentic and genuine*. And, to ſet this article in the cleareſt light, I ſhall trace things from their original. Thus,

Every man who applies himſelf to ſtudy, and who, by his own reſearches, has come to the knowledge of things, cannot but have obſerved, that, as the particular things, or *exiſtences*, whoſe ſeveral properties, relations and agreements, make up the matter of his knowledge, are various, and of quite different natures; ſo the meaſures, or *proofs*, whereby a man is led to the perception of truth, or to the knowledge of thoſe different things in themſelves, or, as they are related to one another, are equally *different*, and muſt neceſſarily be ſo, as they immediately ariſe from the *different nature* of the things themſelves. And indeed the attempt would be extremely fooliſh, to go about to explain the truth of a thing, by that kind of proof with which the nature of the thing itſelf has no ſort of connection: Nor is it leſs abſurd to demand, in any caſe, that ſort of proof, which the nature of things will not admit of. The real knowledge of mankind, and of every intelligent being, lies wholly in the perception of things themſelves, which every body will confeſs, can only be apprehended by thoſe means that are ſuited to their nature. Now, the things or exiſtences, whoſe ſeveral properties, relations and agreements, are the objects of our knowledge, and beyond which we can know nothing, may be reduced to theſe two general heads.

Firſt, There are ſuch things, whoſe *inward nature* is in no degree *precarious*, depending on will and pleaſure, but in itſelf is *fixed* and ſtable, immutable, abſolutely independent, and whoſe truth and certainty, whoſe real exiſtence, every mind capable of apprehending it, may, at *all times*, and in *all places*, perceive and underſtand. Of this ſort I reckon *geometrical truths*, the *moral virtues*, and the *being and perfections of the Deity*: In diſcovering the truth

truth of which, as *to the two firſt*, we look immediately into the things themſelves, we perceive their eſſential properties and relations, and are infallibly certain about their agreements; and as *to the laſt*, *viz.* the *exiſtence of God*, we *here* indeed come to the knowledge of this truth by attending to the world about us, theſe finite dependent beings, which, we are abſolutely ſure, muſt be the effects of divine power, wiſdom and goodneſs; but in another world, there is reaſon to think, we ſhall have immediate viſion or intuition.

In the *next place*, there are ſuch things, whoſe natures have *nothing in them of neceſſity*, and which for their exiſtence, their properties and affections, do entirely *depend* on the will of other beings: Of this ſort I reckon all the ſeveral things of this viſible world, that are the free productions of the ſovereign Mind; and all the particular actions or effects of inferior voluntary agents. And in acquiring the knowledge of ſuch things, the moſt direct and immediate way is, *that* of the teſtimony of our *ſenſes*. Thus our ſenſes aſſure us of a vaſt variety of creatures in heaven and in earth; they diſcover to us the viciſſitudes of day and night, of ſummer and winter, ſeed-time and harveſt; they diſtinguiſh the individuals of our own ſpecies, and they let us know what particular actions *this* or *that* man is the author of. But as to things of this ſort, how extremely ſcanty ſhould our knowledge be, had we no other way to acquire it? Going no farther than the immediate teſtimony of our ſenſes, no man could know that this world was exiſting before he obſerved it; nor could we be certain there now is, or ever was, any more of this earth; or that it now is, or ever was any further inhabited, than this ſmall ſpot of ground with which we are acquainted.

All

All mankind therefore, who, with reſpect to things under the ſun, pretend to know any more than thoſe few articles, of the truth of which their ſenſes immediately inform them, muſt neceſſarily allow, *there* is ſome other way than the immediate teſtimony of our ſenſes, whereby we can come to the certain knowledge of thoſe things whoſe exiſtence *depends* on the will and pleaſure of other beings. And ſince this knowledge cannot poſſibly ariſe from our looking into the nature of the things themſelves, as we do in the caſe of *geometrical* exiſtences, *&c.* whoſe nature and properties are independent, abſolutely neceſſary, and muſt therefore appear in all ages, and in all places, unalterably the ſame; the only remaining way ſeems to be that of the information, or *teſtimony* of other intelligent beings, upon whoſe truth and veracity we can ſafely rely.

Thus from the information of others, we know and reſt aſſured, that this world, in its preſent ſituation, or under the direction of the ſame general laws that produce day and night, *&c.* has ſubſiſted for ſo many ages paſt, and has, all along, been inhabited by ſuch particular kinds of animals, whereof the individuals have been continually ſucceeding to one another: After the ſame manner we certainly know, that, beſides this iſland of *Britain*, there are, at this day, in the earth, a great many other iſlands, and vaſt continents, all inhabited; that are divided in diſtinct ſtates and kingdoms, and whoſe forms of government, whoſe laws and cuſtoms, in many inſtances, do all differ from one another: And thus, likewiſe, we are perſuaded beyond doubting, that ſuch particular perſons did live, and ſuch others are now living in the world, and were the authors of ſuch particular actions.

It

It is from this ſource, I mean, from the *teſtimony* of others, that, with reſpect to this ſort of things, whoſe exiſtence depends on the free-will of other active beings, our greateſt ſtock of knowledge ariſes: And altho' it cannot be univerſally affirmed, that, in every article, we may depend ſafely on *human* teſtimony; yet this no more renders our knowledge, founded on ſuch proofs, uncertain or precarious, than a man's being led, in the uſe of his *rational* faculties, into a particular opinion contradictory to reaſon, or to the nature of things, can render our knowledge, ariſing from reaſon, or the nature of things, a matter of mere uncertainty. Such is the conſtitution of human nature, or, by ſuch principles are all mankind governed, that, in numberleſs inſtances, we can be abſolutely ſure of the truth of things, from the information or teſtimony of other people. We regard it as an undoubted truth, that juſt now there is ſuch a nation as the kingdom of *France*, where the preſent prince is *Lewis* XV. whoſe will, in the public adminiſtration, is ſubject to no controul: And, as fully do we reſt aſſured, that, in the city of *Rome*, ſtill ſubſiſting, and now the ſeat of *Popes*, there was, about MDCCC. years ago, an Emperor called *Auguſtus*; who, in the battle of *Actium*, overthrew *Anthony*; who, oftner than once, ſhut up the temple of *Janus*; and who, for many years, peaceably enjoyed the ſovereign dominion of a great part of the world. About the certainty of ſuch things we are as much ſatisfied, as about any propoſition in *Euclid*. " So " many circumſtances, *ſays Mr. Toland*, frequently " concur in hiſtory, as render it equal to intuition: " Thus, *ſays he*, I can as ſoon deny my own be- " ing, as the murder of *Cicero*, or the ſtory of

" *William*

" *William the Conqueror* *. " And indeed all mankind rely on human teſtimony; we venture our lives and fortunes upon it; in our own experience we find ourſelves ſafe in truſting it; our ſtock of knowledge would be extremely poor and inconſiderable, nay, in nowiſe could mankind live aſſociated without it.

Now, upon this ſort of certainty, *univerſally* depended on, and in this its influence, abſolutely neceſſary for the ſubſiſtence of human ſociety in any form whatſoever, do we reſt aſſured of the truth of the *goſpel-hiſtory*, namely, *that*, ſo many ages ago, there were in the world ſuch perſons as *Jeſus Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*; *that* they taught ſuch particular doctrines; *that* they wrought ſuch extraordinary works; *that* Jeſus Chriſt was *crucified* at *Jeruſalem*; *that* his Apoſtles confidently reported, *he roſe* again from the dead, and *aſcended* into heaven; *that* in teſtifying this his reſurrection, and aſcenſion, and in publiſhing his doctrines, beginning at *Jeruſalem*, they went through the world, and every where *ſuffered* the greateſt hardſhips, and cruelleſt perſecutions, pretending, that in this miniſtry, they were *employed by heaven.* Theſe, I ſay, are the things, as to the certainty of which we are fully ſatisfied from human teſtimony. And as the nature of the things themſelves cannot poſſibly ſuffer their truth, or the reality of their exiſtence, to be made out after any other manner; ſo thoſe perſons, who demand *that* ſort of proof that is founded in the independent abſolute *neceſſity* of the exiſtence, the properties, and affections of things, are moſt unreaſonable, and would be gratified in what the *nature* of things renders ſimply impoſſible: Which is ſo far from thinking freely, and as it becomes a reaſonable being, that

* Chriſtianity not myſterious, p. 128.

that it is thinking moſt abſurdly, and in clean contradiction to that univerſal ſtandard, whereby all our thoughts and ſentiments ought entirely to be directed, and without our attending to which, we can never hope, in any inſtance, to diſcover truth, or to arrive at certainty.

Nor can a man juſtify his refuſing to admit the truth of the things above mentioned, in alledging, that thoſe things being made the *foundation* of a religious inſtitution, upon which we are to venture our happineſs in another world, they become of *too great* conſequence to have their certainty depending on *human* teſtimony. For, the queſtion is not about the importance of the things, but about their truth and reality; *whether* there were in the world ſuch perſons, and *whether* thoſe perſons were the authors of ſuch actions? If theſe articles be counted of importance, our inquiries into their certainty ought to be the exacter, the more ſtrict and rigorous, without all biaſs or prejudice: And if, after a diligent and narrow ſearch, they are ſtill found to be true, they muſt, *in reaſon*, be allowed to operate according to their nature.

Mean while, to pretend, that ſuch articles, whoſe exiſtence can no otherways be explained, are too conſiderable to depend for their certainty on human teſtimony, ſeems to intimate, that, in aſcertaining the truth of the particular articles of ſuch a determined *claſs* of things, we muſt have one ſpecies of proofs for thoſe of *ſmaller*, and another ſort of proofs for thoſe of *greater* conſequence. But, would it not be ridiculous to inſinuate, that, with the ſame ſort of eyes, whereby I diſtinguiſh a piece of dirty way, as I am travelling, that would ſoil my ſhoes, I cannot diſtinguiſh a precipice that would break my neck, but muſt have other ſort of evidence? And

is it not equally extravagant, to alledge, that, by the ſame ſort of evidence, whereby the *Deiſts* are well aſſured, *there* was ſuch a perſon as *Socrates*, *that* he taught ſuch doctrines, and ſuffered ſuch a death at *Athens*; we cannot reſt ſatisfied, *there* was ſuch a perſon as *Jeſus Chriſt*, *that* he taught ſuch doctrines, *that* he ſuffered ſuch a death at *Jeruſalem*, *that* his *Diſciples* reported he roſe again the third day after his crucifixion, *&c.*? Whatever, therefore, be the moment of the things, if the reality of their exiſtence be made out by *that ſort* of proof, which alone the particular nature of *that claſs* of things will admit of, no man can reject their certainty without being highly unreaſonable. " *All* " *poſſible matters of fact*, ſays Mr. *Toland*, *duly at-* " *teſted by* COEVOUS *perſons*, *as known to them*, *and* " *ſucceſſively related by others of different times*, *nations*, " *or intereſts*, *who could neither be impoſed upon them-* " *ſelves*, *nor be juſtly ſuſpected of combining toge-* " *ther to deceive others*, *ought to be received by us for* " *as certain and indubitable as if we had ſeen them* " *with our own eyes*, *or heard them with our own* " *ears.* By this means it is, *continues this noted* " *author*, I believe there was ſuch a city as *Car-* " *thage*, ſuch a Reformer as *Luther*, and that there " is ſuch a kingdom as *Poland.* When all theſe " rules concur in any matter of fact, I take it then " *for demonſtration*, which is nothing elſe but *irreſiſtible* " *evidence from proper proofs* *." And, that the ſeveral articles of the *goſpel-hiſtory*, above mentioned, are ſupported by ſuch proofs as make us as certain about their reality, as we poſſibly can be about the truth of any thing of the like nature, ſuppoſe the murder of *Cicero*, or the ſtory of *William the Conqueror*,

* Chriſtianity not myſterious, p. 17.

Conqueror, which Mr. *Toland* has told us, he can "no more deny than his own being," is, to every thinking man, inconteſtibly manifeſt.

Nor is it leſs manifeſt, that this certainty, concerning the real exiſtence of ſuch perſons and actions as are mentioned in the Goſpel, (ſuppoſing the original hiſtory, with its coeval circumſtances, as we now have it, had been tranſmitted down to us) we ſhould have had, even tho' the Chriſtian inſtitution had expired with the Apoſtles, and there were not now one Chriſtian in the world. In this caſe, indeed, we ſhould have had a ready proof, in ſpite of all the hiſtorical appearances to the contrary, that the Apoſtles, in pretending a commiſſion from Heaven, were either Impoſtors, or Enthuſiaſts; but that ſuch perſons exiſted, were the authors of ſuch actions, and had reported ſuch events, could never be called in queſtion. At the ſame time, I am apt to think, that Chriſtianity ſtill ſubſiſting heightens our certainty (I do not now ſay, as to the divinity of that inſtitution, but) as to the real exiſtence of ſuch perſons, and their having taught, and performed, and reported ſuch things in the world (*a*). Let us view the matter in this

(*a*) Θαύματα ἐργαζεται, ϗ προλέγε τινὰ τῶν μακρὸις ὕστερον χρόνοις ἐκβησομένων· [*particularly*, τῆς οἰκεμένης χεδὸν ἁπασης ὑπὸ ἀσεβειας κατεχομένης, Ἐπὶ ταύτη τῇ πέτρα οἰκοδομήτω με τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, ϗ πύλαι ᾅδε ὐ κατιχύσεσιν αὐτῆς] διὰ μὲν τῶν τότε γινομένων τὴν ἀλήθειαν τῶν μετὰ πολὺν χρόνον ἐκβησομένων ἐγγυώμενος παρὰ τοῖς τότε ἀκροαταῖς, τοῖς τε μετὰ ταῦτα ἐσομενοις ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων ἐκβάσεων ἀξιόπισα δεικνὺς, ϗ τὰ ἐν ἐκεινῳ τῷ χρόνῳ γεγενημένα θαύματα, ϗ ἀπὸ τῆς διπλῆς ταύτης ἀποδείξεως ϗ τὰ περὶ τῆς βασιλειας πισεύμενος. Chryſoſt. Demonſt. quod Chriſtus ſit Deus, oper. tom. vi. p. 634.

light, which I ſhall explain with all the clearneſs I am able.

In fact, it is certain, that juſt now in the world, there are infinite numbers of people profeſſing Chriſtianity; That this is the public religion of nations, and has the countenance and protection of civil authority. There is indeed, among Chriſtians, a great variety of ſects, that have each of them their own peculiar opinions and ſentiments, and that differ from one another in their religious rites and ceremonies. But what differences ſoever may prevail in the Chriſtian world about other matters, in this they are all agreed, That the hiſtory of the Goſpel is, in all inſtances, true and genuine; and they univerſally obſerve certain rites, ſuch as Baptiſm, the Euchariſt, and the Lord's day, as memorials of ſome very conſiderable events. In Baptiſm, the initiating rite, we renounce every other religious inſtitution, we undertake the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and we devote ourſelves, thro' Jeſus Chriſt, to the *only true God* and Father of all, to ſerve him *without fear*, according to the Goſpel of his Son, *in holineſs and righteouſneſs all the days of our life:* In the Euchariſt, we commemorate the crucifixion of Jeſus Chriſt at Jeruſalem, praiſing the name of God for his great ſalvation: And on the firſt day of the week, the day on which Chriſt is ſaid to have riſen from the dead, we joyfully aſſemble together to celebrate his reſurrection. All this is real matter of fact, we have it from the information of our ſenſes. And the queſtion is, To what ſenſible cauſe muſt theſe ſenſible effects be aſcribed? Or, How came this profeſſion of Chriſtianity, or the obſervation of ſuch ſtated ſolemn rites, to be introduced into the world? No man living can imagine, that theſe things had their riſe in the preſent age. We are infallibly certain, that they

they prevailed among our forefathers of the former age. And, if we ſtill go backwards from one age to another, the ſame evidence by which we are aſſured that this, or any other part of the world where Chriſtianity now prevails, was inhabited, and, in ſuch an age, was governed by ſuch particular laws, civil or religious, will convince us, that thoſe things were all along exiſting, till we come to that age, wherein there was no ſuch thing as Chriſtianity, but religious inſtitutions of a quite contrary nature. Thus, in tracing out the riſe of this *Phænomenon*, beginning at the preſent age,

From one certain ſtep to another, founded on the public laws, the unqueſtionable cuſtoms of particular kingdoms, we are led to the undoubted knowledge of the exiſtence of Chriſtianity in thoſe more diſtant ages, when a conſiderable part of the world was under the dominion of the Roman Emperors; and running up our inquiries thro' the reigns of thoſe Emperors, we meet with ſo many of them not only profeſſing themſelves Chriſtians, but, by their public laws and edicts, protecting and encouraging that inſtitution (*b*); till we are interrupted in the reign of *Julian*, who purſued other meaſures, and revived the public profeſſion of Idolatry, as we learn from *Ammianus Marcellinus* (*c*), who lived in thoſe days;

(*b*) This was the ſtate of things in the ſhort reign of Jovian, immediately before we come up to that of Julian: Οἷα γὰρ αὖθις ἐπεισῆλθε τῇ τοῦ βασιλέως σφαγῇ; σεμνοὶ μὲν οἱ κατὰ τῶν θεῶν δημηγορῦντες.——νέων δὲ οἱ μὲν κατεσκάφησαν, οἱ δ' ἡμιτέλεσοι γέλως ἔσασι Χριστιανοῖς τοῖς μιαροῖς. Liban. Parental. in Julian. cap. 14. 8.

(*c*) Lib. 22. p. 476. G.

days; from *Eutropius* (*d*), who ſerved in that expedition wherein *Julian* was killed; and from *Libanius* (*e*), who ſeems to claim the merit of promoting this Emperor's paſſion for Paganiſm. And not only did *Julian* endeavour to ſupport the cauſe of the gods, and to gain proſelytes to their ſervice, by his authority and example, by ſollicitation and bribes; but, for the ſame purpoſe, he wrote a large Treatiſe, wherein, *Libanius* tells us, he goes about to ſhow, that thoſe Books which make the man of *Paleſtine* to be God, and the Son of God, contain nothing but things ſilly and ridiculous (*f*); ſo that, by the ſame evidence whereby we know there was ſuch a perſon as the Emperor *Julian*, we are aſſured there was, among men, ſuch a religion as the Chriſtian, which, in his time, prevailed in the world, and which he had formed a deſign to extirpate.

But carrying on our inquiries ſtill backwards, (as *Libanius* gives us ground to expect, while he compares the reign of *Julian* to a pure beam of light, but the times immediately before and after him to thick darkneſs (*g*); and tells us, that this Emperor opened the temples, and reſtored the altars of the gods;

(*d*) "Nimius religionis Chriſtianæ inſectator: perinde tamen "ut cruore abſtineret." Lib. 10. cap. 10. What the moderate Heathen underſtood by Julian's being *nimius inſectator*, we learn from Am. Marcellinus: "Illud autem inclemens obruendum "perenni ſilentio, quod arcebat docere Magiſtros, Rhetoricos et "Grammaticos, ritus Chriſtiani cultores." Lib. 22. p. 480. F.

(*e*) De ulciſcend. Juliani nece, cap. 22.

(*f*) Ἐπιδέμενος τοῖς βίβλοις, ἃι τὸν ἐκ Παλαισίνης ἄνθρωπον θεόν τε καὶ θεῦ παῖδα ποιοῦσι, μάχη τε μακρᾷ, καὶ ἐλέγχων ἰσχύϊ γέλωτα ἀποφήνας τὰ λεγόμενα, σοφώτερος ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς δίδεικτο τῦ Τυρίυ γέροντος. Liban. Parental. in Julian. cap. 87.

(*g*) Ibid. cap. 146.

gods (*h*);) we come up to two Emperors, the immediate predeceſſors of *Julian*, viz. *Conſtantius* and his father *Conſtantine*, who were both of them Chriſtians, and, by their public edicts, had afforded the civil protection to that inſtitution. As for *Conſtantine*, he was the firſt Emperor who declared himſelf Chriſtian, as *Zoſimus* informs us (*i*); and who, by expreſs

(*h*) Καὶ τὸν καιρὸν ἥρπαζεν ὃν ἥτει παρὰ τῶν θεῶν σιγῇ τε καὶ βωμῶν χωρίς, ἐ γάρ ἦσαν. ἀνεῴγνυτο δὴ νέως τε ὁ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς, καὶ ὁ τῶν ἄλλων θεων. Ibid. cap. 54. 55. 60.

(*i*) The crimes which Zoſimus would faſten upon Conſtantine are ſhown by other authors to be wrongfully charged. And as to the reaſon he aſſigns for this Emperor's converſion, it is far from being in any degree probable. Nor, among ſinful mankind, can it be counted the diſgrace, but the glory of the Chriſtian inſtitution, that to penitent offenders it promiſes the pardon of all ſins, how black or hainous ſoever. So that wherein Zoſimus would have Paganiſm to be preferable, it is infinitely inferior to the Goſpel.

Ταῦτα συνεπισάμενος ἑαυτῷ (Conſtantinus) καὶ προσέτι γε ὅρκων καταφρονήσεις, προσῆει τοῖς ἱερεῦσι καθάρσια τῶν ἡμαρτημένων αὐτῶν. εἰποντων δὲ ὡς ἐ παραδέδοται καθαρμῷ τρόπος δυσσεβήματα τηλικαῦτα καθῆραι δυνάμενος, Αἰγύπλιός τις ἐξ Ιβερίας εἰς τὴν Ρώμην ἐλθὼν, καὶ ταῖς εἰς τὰ βασιλεια γυναιζὶ συνηθὴς γενόμενος, ἐντυχὼν τῷ Κωνσαντίνῳ πάσης ἁμαρτάδος ἀναιρετικὴν εἶναι τὴν τῶν Χρισιανῶν διεβεβαιωσάτο δόξαν. καὶ τῦτο ἔχειν ἐπαγγελμα, τὸ τὺς ἀσεβεῖς μεταλαμβάνοντας αὐτῆς, πάσης ἁμαρτίας ἔξω παραχρῆμα καθίσασθαι. δεξάμένῳ δὲ ῥαφ Κωνσαντίνῳ τὸν λόγον, καὶ ἀφεμένῳ μὲν τῶν πατρίων, μεταχόντος δὲ ὧν ὁ Αἰγύπλιος αὐτῷ μετεδίδῳ, τῆς ἀσεβείας τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐποιήσατο, τὴν μαντικὴν ἔχειν ἐν ὑποψίᾳ. Zoſim. lib. 2. p. 104.

Much after the ſame manner does Julian, in concluding his Cæſars, ridicule the Chriſtian religion, and, in particular, its Sacrament of Baptiſm. But all ſuch reflections are ſo many proofs of the hiſtory of the Goſpel; which is the only thing I here have in view.

expreſs laws, allowing to every man a liberty of conſcience, became the gaurdian of Chriſtianity in particular, and took the profeſſors thereof into his ſpecial favour (*i*). So far did this Emperor diſtinguiſh the Chriſtian religion, that whereas the firſt day of the week was univerſally obſerved by Chriſtians as a feſtival in memory of the reſurrection of *Jeſus* (*k*), he commanded, that on that day, all over the *Roman* dominions, no courts of juſtice ſhould be open, and no work, or any ſort of ſecular buſineſs, except that of agriculture, ſhould any where be done: For which we have the ſame evidence, as there is for any other law of the *Roman* empire (*l*). This revolution in favour of Chriſtianity, happened about 300 years after the birth of Chriſt, and immediately upon the back of a terrible perſecution, which began in the reign of *Dioclefian*, and, for ſeveral years, had cruelly raged againſt the Chriſtians. Hence we have certain knowledge, that the Goſpel was in being before the days of *Conſtantine*, and that it could not be forged by the politicians of his reign, as an engine to ſerve the ends of civil government.

Nor were there wanting, a good way back from *Conſtantine*, ſome Heathen Emperors who had an high opinion of Chriſt, and proved very favourable towards his diſciples. Thus, 100 years before *Conſtantine* turned Chriſtian, *Alexander Severus* had the image of Chriſt in his private chapel, and would have

(*i*) Euſeb. H. Eccleſiaſt. lib. 10. cap. 5. &c.

(*k*) Id. de vita Conſtant. lib. iv. cap. 18.

(*l*) Omnes judices urbanæque plebes, et cunctarum artium otia venerabili die Solis quieſcant. Ruri tamen poſiti agrorum culturae libere licenterque inſerviant: quoniam frequenter evenit, ut non aptius alio die frumenta ſulcis, aut vineæ ſcrobibus, mandentur, ne occaſione momenti pereat commoditas coeleſti proviſione conceſſa. C. l. 3. de Feriis, tit. 12.

have built a temple to him, and admitted him among the gods; as *Adrian*, in the beginning of the ſecond century, is ſaid to have intended; had not the Prieſts, from their divinations, aſſured him, "it "would turn all the world Chriſtian, and cauſe the "other temples to be deſerted (*m*)." Nevertheleſs *Alexander* allowed Chriſtians the free exerciſe of their religion, and public places for their worſhip (*n*). And how very acceptable the diſcipline and doctrine of the Chriſtians muſt have been to this Emperor, one may learn from thoſe two remarkable inſtances: It was the cuſtom among Chriſtians, before they ordained their Prieſts, to publiſh their names to the people, that they might have

(*m*) Si facultas eſſet, matutinis horis in Larario ſuo (in quo et divos principes, ſed optimos electos, et animas ſanctiores, in queis et Apollonium, et, quantum ſcriptor ſuorum temporum dicit, Chriſtum, Abrahamum, et Orpheum, et hujuſcemodi deos, habebat, ac majorum effigies) rem divinam faciebat.——Chriſto templum facere voluit, eumque inter Deos recipere; quod et Adrianus cogitaſſe fertur, qui templa in omnibus civitatibus ſine ſimulacris juſſerat fieri: quae hodie idcirco, quia non habent numina, dicuntur *Adriani*; quae ille ad hoc paraſſe dicebatur: ſed prohibitus eſt ab iis qui conſulentes ſacra repererant omnes Chriſtianos futuros ſi id optato eveniſſet, et templa reliqua deſerenda. Lamprid. apud. hiſt. Rom. ſcrip. p. 349. D. p. 351. E.

For ſome time, in the reign of Adrian, the Chriſtians were perſecuted. But, after the apologies preſented to him by Quadratus and Ariſtides, and ſome letters he received from the Governors of Provinces, ſhewing how unreaſonable it was, that the Chriſtians, without being accuſed of any crime, ſhould be ſacrificed to the meer clamours of the populace; this Emperor came to be very favourable, and wrote in particular, to Minucius Fundanus Proconſul of Aſia, commanding, that "no Chriſtian ſhould be "diſturbed on account of his religion, and that whoſoever ac- "cuſed them, without alledging any other crime againſt them, "ſhould be puniſhed." Vid. Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. lib. 4. cap. 8, 9.

(*n*) Id. ibid. p. 347. G. 352. F.

have acceſs to make their objections, if they had any; this he judged ſo worthy of imitation, that he followed the ſame courſe in appointing the Governors of Provinces: And ſo much did he admire this common maxim among Chriſtians, *Do not that to another, which you would not have another do to you*; that, in puniſhing offenders, he cauſed the common Cryer to proclaim it, and made inſcriptions of it upon his own palace, and the public works and buildings *(o)*.

But, as I have already hinted, Chriſtianity was not always thus fortunate. Under the reigns of moſt of the Heathen Emperors, its profeſſors were barbarouſly perſecuted: Beſides that ſeveral men of wit and learning keenly attacked it in the way of argument, and employed all their art to ſtop its progreſs, and ruin its credit in the world. And from both theſe events, we are furniſhed with abundant evidence for the truth of the Goſpel-hiſtory.

It is certainly a great misfortune to the Chriſtian cauſe, that the writings of thoſe Heathen authors, who endeavoured either to *reaſon* or to *laugh* Chriſtianity out of the world, are loſt. But thoſe fragments of theirs, which the Chriſtians who oppoſed them,

(o) Ubi aliquos voluiſſet vel Rectores Provinciis dare, vel Praepoſitos facere, vel Procuratores (id eſt, Rationales) ordinare, nomina eorum proponebat, hortans populum, ut ſi quis quid haberet criminis, probaret manifeſtis rebus; ſi non probaſſet, ſubiret poenam capitis. Dicebatque grave eſſe, quum id Chriſtiani et Judaei facerent in praedicandis Sacerdotibus qui ordinandi ſunt, non fieri in Provinciarum Rectoribus, quibus et fortunae hominum committerentur et capita.— Clamabatque ſaepius, quod a quibuſdam, ſive Judaeis ſive Chriſtianis, audierat, et tenebat: idque per praeconem, quum aliquem emendaret, dici jubebat, "Quod tibi non vis, alteri ne feceris" Quam ſententiam uſque adeo dilexit, ut et in palatio et publicis operibus praeſcribi juberet. Id. ibid. p. 352. D. 353. D.

them, have tranſcribed in their writings, do plainly anſwer my purpoſe, as they pointedly inform us of ſo many matters of fact.

Thus the Emperor *Julian*, ambitious of the government only as it would enable him to reſtore the worſhip of the gods, in his books againſt the Chriſtians, ſo far is he from denying the certainty of thoſe articles, which I have above mentioned concerning Chriſt and his Apoſtles, that he admits them all as true and genuine. He takes notice of *Jeſus* as the ſon of *Mary*, ſaid to derive his being, not from *Joſeph*, *Mary*'s huſband, but from the *Holy Ghoſt* (*p*): He quotes ſeveral paſſages of the Old Teſtament, (ſome of which are tranſcribed in the New) held to be propheſies concerning the Meſſiah; and, at the ſame time, would have *Matthew* and *Luke* to oppoſe one another in the genealogy of *Jeſus* (*q*): He mentions his being inrolled along with his father and mother in the *Cenſus* under *Cyrenius* (*r*): He ſpeaks of his miracles, ſuch as his having *power over ſpirits*, his *walking upon the ſea*, his *caſting out devils* (*s*): And he tells us, that about 300 years a-

(*p*) Julian apud Cyril. lib. 8. p. 253. Oper. vol. vi. Chalcidius, a Platonic philoſopher, (whether Heathen or Chriſtian, learned men are not agreed; nor will I preſume to interpoſe) in his Commentary upon Plato's Timaeus, p. 219. ſpeaks of the ſtar that appeared at our Saviour's birth, after this manner: "Eſt a-"lia ſanctior et venerabilior hiſtoria, quae perhibit ortu ſtellae "cujuſdam, non morbos morteſque denunciatas, ſed deſcenſum "Dei venerabilis ad humanae conſervationis, rerumque morta-"lium gratiam: quam ſtellam cum nocturno itinere inſpexiſſent "Chaldaeorum profecto ſapientes viri, et conſideratione rerum "coeleſtium ſatis eximii, quaeſiſſe dicuntur recentem ortum Dei, "repertaque illa majeſtate puerili veneratos eſſe, et vota Deo "tanto convenientia nuncupaſſe."

(*q*) Julian ubi ſupra, p. 252, 261, 262. (*r*) Ibid. lib. 6. p. 213. (*s*) Ibid.

go, in the reign of *Tiberius*, "Jesus having gained "a few followers, and those of the meanest or "basest sort, however famous he might be among "such people, yet in his lifetime he did nothing me- "morable, unless one will reckon the curing the "lame and the blind, and the relieving those that "were possessed with devils, in the villages of *Beth-* "*saida* and *Bethany*, to be feats mighty and consider- "able (*t*)." Nor does *Julian* neglect to quote some articles of the sayings and discourses of our Saviour as reported in the Gospels. Thus he observes, that one of Christ's disciples having said unto him, *Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father*; Jesus said unto him, *Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead* (*u*): That *Jesus* the *Nazarene* made these reflections, *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness* (*x*): That he professed *he came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil*; assuring the world, that *whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven* (*y*): That he gave out this command, *Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,*

(*t*) Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀναπείσας τὸ χείριστον τῶν παρ' ὑμῖν ὀλίγους, πρὸς τοῖς τριακοσίοις ἐνιαυτοῖς ὀνομάζεται, ἐργασάμενος παρ' ὃν ἔζη χρόνον ἔργον οὐδὲν ἀκοῆς ἄξιον, εἰ μή τις οἴεται τοὺς κυλλοὺς καὶ τυφλοὺς ἰᾶσασθαι, καὶ δαιμονῶντας ἐφορκίζειν ἐν Βεθσαιδᾷ καὶ ἐν Βεθανίᾳ ταῖς κώμαις, τῶν μεγίστων ἔργον εἶναι. Ibid. p. 191. Ἐπὶ Τιβερίου γὰρ ἦτοι Κλαυδίου ταῦτα ἐγένετο. Ibid p. 206.

(*u*) Ibid. lib. 10 p. 335. (*x*) Ibid.

(*y*) Julian apud Cyril. lib. 10. p. 351.

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt (*z*). Theſe are ſo many particulars that relate immediately to *Jeſus Chriſt*.

And as for his Apoſtles; whilſt *Julian* would have them guilty of inchantments, and of teaching that black art to their followers, he confeſſes, not only that the Apoſtles wrought miracles themſelves, but that they imparted the ſame power to others (*a*): He would have St. *Paul*, in particular, to be the greateſt conjurer that ever was (*b*): He takes notice of *Peter*'s viſion in the Tanner's houſe, about aboliſhing the Jewiſh diſtinction of meats (*c*): He brings in ſeveral paſſages from the writings of St. *Paul* (*d*); ſuch as *Rom.* iii. 29. x. 4. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. He frequently remarks on St. *John*'s doctrine, in the firſt chapter of his Goſpel, concerning *the divinity of Chriſt*; *his making all things*, &c. on which occaſion, he mentions ſo many of the Apoſtles particularly by name, *viz. Peter*, *Paul*, *Mark*, *John*, *Matthew*, *Luke* (*e*); whereof the two

(*z*) Ibid. lib 9. p. 291.

(*a*) Παλαιὸν ἦν τοῦτο τοῖς Ιουδαίοις τῆς μαγγανείας τὸ ἔργον, ἐγκαθεύδειν τοῖς μνήμασιν, ἐνυπνίων χάριν. ὁ δὴ καὶ τοὺς Αποστόλους ὑμῶν εἰκός ἐστιν μετὰ τὴν τοῦ διδασκάλου τελευτὴν ἐπιτηδεύσαντας, ὑμῖν τε ἐξ ἀρχῆς παραδοῦναι τοῖς πρώτοις πεπιστευκόσι, καὶ τεχνικώτερον ὑμῶν αὐτοὶ μαγγανεῦσαι, τοῖς δὲ μετ' αὐτοὺς ἀποδεῖξαι δημοσίᾳ τῆς μαγγανείας ταύτης καὶ βδελυρίας τὰ ἐργαστήρια. Id. ibid. lib 10. p. 339.

(*b*) Τὸν πάντας πανταχοῦ τοὺς πώποτε γόητας καὶ ἀπατεῶνας ὑπερβαλλόμενον Παῦλον. Ibid. lib. 3. p. 100.

(*c*) Ibid. lib 9 p. 314. (*d*) Ibid. lib. 3. p. 106. lib. 7. p. 245. lib 9. p. 320. (*e*) Ibid. lib. 6. p. 213. lib. 8 p. 262. lib. 10. p. 327, 333. Amelius, a Platonic philoſopher, long before Julian, ſeems to bear witneſs to the truth of St. John's Goſpel, while he aſſures us, "as he ſhould anſwer to Jove," that a Barbarian

two laſt, he elſewhere propoſes the *Galileans* ſhould explain in their churches, rather than go about to teach thoſe Heathen authors, whoſe writings they condemned (*f*). And laying hold of every thing which he thought might diſcredit the Chriſtian inſtitution,

Barbarian (by whom he plainly means this Apoſtle) is clearly of opinion, That the *Logos* was with God, in the rank and dignity of a *Principle*; and was God: That by him all things whatſoever were made: That what was made, was in him enlivened, and life, and real being: That he deſcended into a body; and being clothed with fleſh, appeared as a man; giving proofs, at the ſame time, of the greatneſs and excellency of his nature: in ſhort, That, upon his diſſolution, he was again exalted, and became God, ſuch as he was before his aſſuming of human nature. Ibid. lib. 8. p. 283. D. Vid. Theodoret. Therapeut. ſerm. 2. p. 500. I ſhall tranſcribe the paſſage from Euſebius:

Καὶ ἔτος ἄρα ἦν ὁ Λόγος καθ' ὃν ἀιεὶ ὄντα τὰ γινόμενα ἐγένετο, ὡς ἄν γε ὁ Ἡράκλειτος ἀξιώσειε, γε νὴ Δί', ὃν ὁ Βάρβαρος ἀξιοῖ ἐν τῇ τῆς ἀρχῆς τάξει, τε γε ἀξία καθεσηκότα πρὸς Θεὸν εἶναι, γε θεὸν εἶναι. δι' ὃ πάνθ' ἁπλῶς γεγενῆσθαι. ἐν ᾧ τὸ γενόμενον, ζῶν, γε ζωὴν, γε ὂν πεφυκέναι γε εἰς τὰ σώματα (εἰς τὸ σῶμα, Theod.) πίπλειν, γε σάρκα ἐνδυσάμενον φαντάζεσθαι ἄνθρωπον, μετά γε τῦ τηνικαῦτα δεικνύειν τῆς φύσεως τὸ μεγαλεῖον. ἀμέλει γε ἀναλυθέντα πάλιν ἀποθεῶσθαι, γε θεὸν εἶναι, ὅιος ἦν πρὸ τῦ εἰς τὸ σῶμα, γε τὴν σάρκα, γε τὸν ἄνθρωπον καταχθῆναι. Praep. Evang. lib. 11 cap. 19.

St. John's phraſe, ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, Amelius takes to ſignify *Plato's Ideas*; for he explains it thus, ἐν ᾧ τὸ γενόμενον, ζῶν, γε ζωὴν, γε ὂν πεφυκέναι. Tranſlators do not ſeem to have underſtood this ſentence of Amelius: I have here given what I apprehend to be its true meaning. Vid. Neceſſ. of Revelation, p. 303. marg. About Plato's Ideas.

Auguſtin likewiſe reports, that a certain Platoniſt (perhaps Amelius: if another, ſo much the better) openly profeſſed, that this paſſage of St. John deſerved to be written in letters of gold. De Civ. Dei, lib. 10. cap. 29.

(*g*) Julian. epiſt. 42.

stitution, he upbraids *Jesus* and his Apostles with the meanness of their followers; and among the converts to Christianity mentions *Cornelius* and *Sergius* (*g*).

In short, apprehending that the doctrines of the Gospel do in no degree authorize a persecuting spirit, he severely checks the Christians of his time, in telling them that their cruelties and persecutions against the Heathen, and against those of their own party, who only differed with them in their sentiments about the *dead Man* (*h*), had no other cause but their private passions; since for such doings they had received no command, either from *Jesus* or from *Paul* (*i*). But whatever was the spirit of his days, and

(*g*) Apud Cyril. lib. 6. p. 206.

(*h*) Having just now observed, that Chalcidius reports, as real fact, the *phænomenon* that appeared at our Saviour's birth; I cannot but likewise remark, that the darkness and earthquake, which the Gospels tell us happened at the crucifixion, are as little doubted by Phlegon the Trallian, an Heathen, and freeman to Adrian; who, as we learn from Eusebius, in his Chron. and others, give this account of the matter:

Τῷ δ' ἔτει τῆς ΣΒ ὀλυμπιάδος ἐγένετο ἔκλειψις ἡλιω μεγίστη τῶν ἐγνωρισμένων πρότερων· ἢ νὺξ ὥρα ς' τῆς ἡμέρας ἐγένετο, ὥστε ἢ ἀστέρας ἐν οὐρανῷ φανῆναι. Σεισμὸς τε μέγας κατὰ Βιθυνίαν γενόμενος, τὰ πολλὰ Νικαίας κατέσρεψε. Vid. Orig. in tract. 35. ad Matt. et cont Celsi. lib. 2. p. 80. The same Phlegon confesses, that our Saviour had the knowledge of future events, and that what he foretold, did actually come to pass: From whence (according to Origen, in his 2d B. p. 69 against Celsus) he seems forced to allow, "There is something of divinity in "the Gospel."

(*i*) Ζηλῶτε δὲ αὐτῶν τὰς θυμὰς ἢ τὴν πικρίαν, ἀνατρέποντες ἱερὰ ἢ βωμὰς, ἢ ἀπεσφάξατε οὐχ ἡμῶν μόνον τὰς τοῖς πατρῴοις ἐμμένοντας, ἀλλὰ ἢ τῶν ἐξισης ὑμῖν πεπλανημένων αἱρετικῶν, τὰς μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ὑμῖν τὸν νεκρὸν θρηνῶντας. ἀλλὰ ταῦτα ὑμέτερα μᾶλλον ἐσιν· οἴδαμεν γὰρ ὅτε Ιησᾶς αὐτὰ παρέδωκε κελεύων ὑμῖν, ὅτε Παῦλος· Apud Cyril. lib. 6. p. 205.

and however he accuſes the Chriſtian inſtitution of being incapable of deriving any real goodneſs or excellency to human nature (*k*); yet elſewhere he lets us know, That, in former times, the holy lives, the charity and kind offices of Chriſtians, exerciſed, without diſtinction, towards the Heathen, as well as their own brethren, in relieving the poor, in ſuccouring ſtrangers, and burying the dead, had mightily conduced to eſtabliſh and propagate the Goſpel: Upon which he warmly recommends it to his own Prieſts, as they value the intereſts of the gods, to be zealous in the purſuit of the ſame virtues. "The gods," ſays he, "have vouchſafed us far greater things than "could have been expected. For, in ſo ſhort a "ſpace of time, who durſt have looked for ſo won-"derful a revolution? But why do we count thoſe "things ſufficient, and do not rather attend to what "eſpecially has augmented the impiety, namely, "their humanity towards ſtrangers, their pious "care in burying the dead, and their ſeeming holi-"neſs of life? It is a ſhame that thoſe impious *Ga-"lileans*, ſhould not only provide their own, but our "poor (*l*)." From *Gregory Nazianzen* we likewiſe underſtand, that *Julian* inſulted over Chriſtians in their calamities, jeering them upon their precepts about contemning the world, and living above it, the patiently bearing, the forgiving, and the not reſenting of injuries, ſuch as are frequent in the Goſpel (*m*). To conclude, the Emperor informs us, That, in the days of St. *John*, great multitudes, in many cities of *Greece* and *Italy*, had embraced the religion

(*k*) Ibid lib. 7. p. 229.

(*l*) Epiſt. 49. p. 429. Oper. vid. p. 305. Fragm. et Sozomen. lib. 5. cap. 16. (*m*) Greg. Naz. adv. Julian. orat. 3. p. 94.

religion of *Jesus*; which he is pleased to call *a distemper wherewithal people were seized* (*n*).

Thus far *Julian*, who had inclination, skill, and power, sufficient to have detected a forgery, had there been any such thing in the Christian religion; and who would not have failed, had he found it, to have exposed it to all mankind: Thus far, I say, the Emperor *Julian* supports the credit of the Evangelical history. But, before his time, we find the same good service done the Gospel by *Hierocles*.

This other writer against Christianity, who is said to have excited *Diocletian* to the persecution he raised against the Christians, and to have been very active himself in carrying it on, has so little thought of denying there was such a person as *Jesus Christ*, or that he wrought miracles, such as restoring sight to the blind, and other miracles of the like nature, that he confesses the truth of the whole, and only means to expose the Christians for thinking so highly, on that account, of *Jesus*, whilst, in his opinion, *Apollonius* wrought greater miracles; "and yet," says he "we do not esteem him a god, but only a man "greatly favoured of the gods (*o*)." After the same manner does *Porphyry*, who was earlier in the controversy

(*n*) Apud. Cyril. lib. 10. p. 327.

(*o*) Ἄνω δὲ ἢ κάτω θρυλλοῦσι, σεμνυνόντες τον Ιησοῦν, ὡς τυφλοῖς ἀναβλέψαι τε παραχόντα, ἢ τινα τοιαῦτα δράσαντα θαυμάσια·——Αλλ' ἐπὶ τῶν προγόνων ἡμῶν κατὰ τὴν Νέρωνος βασιλείαν, Απολλώνιος ἤκμασεν ὁ Τυανεὺς,——πολλὰ ἢ θαυμασὰ διεπράξατο·——ἡμεις μὲν τὸν τοιαῦτα πεποιηκότα ὐ θεὸν, αλλὰ θεοῖς κεχαριτμένον ἄνδρα ἡγύμεθα· οἱ δὲ δι' ὀλίγας τερατείας τινὰς τὸν Ιησοῦν θεὸν ἀναγορέυυσι. Hierocl. apud Eusеb. p. 512.

controverſy than *Hierocles*, bear witneſs to the truth of things reported in the Goſpel.

And here, with as great ſincerity as any Infidel can do, and I am confident with far better reaſon, I lament the loſs of *Porphyry*'s books againſt the Chriſtian revelation. Thoſe Gentlemen, indeed, are pleaſed to reproach Chriſtians, as if they had deſignedly deſtroyed all thoſe books that were writ by Heathen authors in oppoſition to the Goſpel. But why then did Chriſtians go about to anſwer thoſe books, and in their anſwers tranſcribe, at leaſt, all the moſt conſiderable objections? Nay, *Origen*, whoſe learning, *Porphyry* tells us, was in his time mightily celebrated, "could not bear to let any "thing paſs unexamined that was advanced by In- "fidels (*p*)." And with reſpect to *Celſus*, (the firſt who publiſhed a formal treatiſe againſt the Chriſtian revelation, and who, no doubt, brought together all the objections he was able either to form himſelf, or to collect from other people,) "That "we may not ſeem," ſays *Origen*, "deſignedly to "paſs over any particular article, as unable to refute "it, we have determined, without obſerving the "natural order and connection of things, to follow "him in the method he purſues in his book, and to "anſwer every one of his objections (*q*)." And as this was the conduct of antient Chriſtians, in their defence of Chriſtianity, what good reaſon have our modern Infidels to charge Chriſtians with the guilt of ſtifling and burning the books of their antient brethren? One ſhould think that the anſwering the books of Infidels ſo very particularly, is a ſtrong proof that Chriſtians meant, that all the objections made by Infidels ſhould be preſerved, that they ſhould

(*p*) Origen. cont. Celſ. lib. p. 22. (*q*) Id. ibid. 31.

ſhould be ſpread abroad in the age when they happened, and handed down to poſterity. I confeſs it as a matter of ſhame and indignation, that the Emperor *Conſtantine*, in one of his letters, gives the world ground to ſuſpect, that *Porphyry*'s books had been attacked in a very unrighteous manner, and ſuffered violence (*r*). But we know, that, after *Conſtantine*'s time, thoſe books were anſwered by *Apollinaris*, that they were in the hands of *Libanius*, and that St. *Jerom*, who went into the other world about an hundred years after the writing of that letter of *Conſtantine*, had peruſed thoſe books, and was deſigning likewiſe to have writ againſt them. Nor do we hear of any books publiſhed in antient times againſt Chriſtianity that have not been anſwered. And beyond queſtion, whatever Chriſtian otherwiſe attempted the deſtruction of thoſe books, he muſt have been ſo far, not only blindly paſſionate and imprudent, but very ignorant of thoſe meaſures whereby one can rationally defend the truth of our holy religion. But what wonder is it, that a few ſuch particular books have been loſt in thoſe almoſt general wrecks that have happened in the republic of letters? It is owing to the prodigious induſtry and application of many learned men, that ſo many antient books have been recovered. And had thoſe books againſt Chriſtianity been ſtill exiſting, I am apt to think, they would not have greatly relieved our Infidels. In the very little one has acceſs to know concerning *Porphyry*'s books, this, to any conſiderate man, cannot but appear evident.

Of thoſe books *Libanius* gives us a ſort of general character, when he tells us, that *Julian* managed

(*r*) Apud Socrat. Hiſt. Eccl. lib. cap. 9.

the argument againſt Chriſtians with greater ſtrength of reaſon, and to better advantage, than *Porphyry*: For ſpeaking of *Julian*'s books, whereof we ſtill have the moſt conſiderable paſſages, he expreſsly ſays, "That the Emperor has ſhown himſelf a more "knowing, and a more able reaſoner than the old "venerable Tyrian *(s)*." Now we have already ſeen that *Julian* makes no exception to the truth of the Goſpel-hiſtory, but, on the contrary, proceeds upon its authenticity. Had *Porphyry*, therefore, purſued the argument in the manner wherein the Deiſts would have the world to ſuſpect he did, I mean, had he objected to the truth of the hiſtory of the Goſpel, and made it appear, that the whole, or any fundamental branch of it, is a meer forgery; as therein he would have at once overturned the whole ſyſtem of Chriſtianity; it is impoſſible that in this argument *Libanius* could have given the preference to *Julian*, who regards the hiſtory in a quite contrary light, and whoſe reaſoning on that account, even ſuppoſing it juſt, muſt have fallen infinitely ſhort of the force of *Porphyry*'s. In a word, had *Porphyry* attacked the authenticity of the Goſpel-hiſtory, and in any meaſure made good his argument, as no argument could have more effectually ruined the credit of the Chriſtian inſtitution, *Julian*, who came after him, would not have failed to have purſued it to its utmoſt extent. Nay, doubtleſs, had there been any foundation for it, every Heathen engaged in the controverſy would have employed it as an invincible argument, wherein they could not but have triumphed over all their adverſaries. But where is the leaſt evidence of any thing of this nature? One may therefore reaſonably preſume, that *Porphyry*, without making any objection of this kind, did, as

(s) Liban. Parental. in Julian. cap. 87.

as well as other Heathens before and after him, argue upon the Goſpel-hiſtory as genuine and authentic.

Again; It would ſeem, that people of curioſity did ſometimes conſult the Oracle concerning certain perſons of fame and diſtinction, wanting to be informed as to their real character. Thus *Chærephon* conſulted the Oracle in relation to *Socrates* (*t*). An addreſs of the like nature was made to the Oracle in the caſe of *Plotinus* (*u*). And thus likewiſe the Oracle was conſulted concerning *Jeſus Chriſt*, "Whether he was a God, and how he came to be puniſhed, or to ſuffer death as a malefactor?" Here therefore the Oracle having declared, that "*Chriſt* "was a perſon of the greateſt ſanctity, and that "his ſoul, after death, was taken up into heaven;" upon this *Porphyry* very piouſly interpoſes this very wholeſome injunction, not unworthy the regard of our modern Infidels, "Thou ſhalt not (ſays "he) blaſpheme *Chriſt*, or ſpeak reproachfully of "him, but pity the weakneſs and folly of thoſe "men who worſhip him (*x*)." And, as *Porphyry* apprehended,

(*t*) Xenoph. Apol. pro Socrat. p. 703. (*u*) Porph. de vita Plot. cap. 22.

(*x*) Παράδοξον ἴσως δόξειεν ἄν τισιν εἶναι τὸ μέλλον λέγεσθαι ὑφ' ἡμῶν· τὸν γὰρ Χρισὸν οἱ θεοὶ εὐσεβέσατον ἀπεφήναντο ϗ ἀθάνατον γεγονότα, εὐφήμως τε αὐτῦ μνημονεύσι·——περὶ γῦν Χρισῦ ἐρωτησάντων, εἰ ἐσὶ θεὸς, φησὶν·

Ὅτ]ι μὲν ἀθαγάτη ψυχὴ μετὰ σῶμα προβαίνει,
Γιγνώσκει σοφιῃ τετιμημένος· ἀλλάγε ψυχὴ
Ανέρος εὐσεβίη προφερεσάτη ἐσὶν ἐκείνη·

εὐσεβέσατον ἄρα ἔφη αὐτὸν, ϗ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῦ, καθαπερ ϗ τῶν

apprehended, that the diſtinguiſhing honours offered to *Jeſus Chriſt*, was the reaſon why *Æſculapius* and the other gods had abandoned their care of mankind (*y*); it is no wonder that he was highly incenſed, and wrote with great virulency againſt the profeſſors of Chriſtianity. However, thus far there is nothing inconſiſtent with the Goſpel-hiſtory; *Porphyry* teſtifies, "*Jeſus Chriſt* was a righteous per-"ſon, of great uprightneſs and integrity; he ſuf-"fered death as a malefactor, but died innocent, "and is now exalted into heaven."

But further; As it is, upon good reaſon, the common opinion, that *Philoſtratus* wrote the life of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, on purpoſe to raiſe up a character that might prove a rival to *Jeſus Chriſt*, and thereby prevent the world from being ſo forward in renouncing the worſhip of the gods, and embracing the religion of *Jeſus*; ſo the ſame deſign, one cannot but obſerve, is carried on by *Porphyry* and his ſcholar *Jamblicus*, who in the life, which each of them wrote,

τῶν ἄλλων, μετὰ θάνατον ἀποθανατισθῆναι, ἣν σέβειν ἀνοῦτας τοὺς Χριστιανούς· Ἐπερωτάντων δὲ διὰ τί ἐκολάσθη, ἔχρησεν·

Σῶμα μὲν ἀνδρηΐσιν βασάνοις ἀΐει προβέβληται·
Ψυχὴ δ' εὐσεβέων εἰς ὑράνον πέδον ἵζει·

——αὐτὸς γὰρ εὐσεβὴς, καὶ εἰς οὐρανὸς, ὥσπερ οἱ εὐσεβεῖς, χωρήσας· ὥστε τοῦτον μὲν ὁ βλασφημήσεις, ἐλεήσεις δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὴν ἄνοιαν· Porph. de Philoſoph. ex Oracul. apud Euſeb. Demonſt. Evangel. p. 134.

(*y*) Νυνὶ δὲ θαυμάζουσιν ἐι τοσούτων ἐτῶν κατέιληφε τὴν πόλιν ἡ νόσος, Ασκληπιοῦ μὲν ἐπιδημίας καὶ τῶν ἄλλων θεῶν μηκέτ' οὔσης· Ιησοῦ γὰρ τιμωμένου, οὐδεμιᾶς τις θεῶν δημοσιᾶς ὠφελείας ἥψατο. Porph. and Euſeb. Praep. Evang. lib. 5. cap. i. p. 179. Vid. Theodoret. Serap. ſerm. 12. in. fin.

wrote, of *Pythagoras*, repreſent that Philoſopher, with reſpect to his original, the ſanctity of his life, the purity of his doctrines, and the greatneſs of his miracles, in ſuch a manner, that the competition is very obvious (z): And indeed the preference ſeems to be given to *Pythagoras*, whilſt *Porphyry* aſſures us, that "no man can be conceived to have done "more wonderful things, and in greater num-"ber (*a*)." Now, as *Porphyry*, in my apprehenſion, means to equal or prefer the miracles of *Pythagoras* to the miracles of *Jeſus*, it cannot well be imagined, nay, it would be groſsly abſurd to imagine, that *Porphyry* held the miracles of *Jeſus* to be meer deluſion or impoſture. I confeſs it appears from St. *Jerom*, that *Porphyry* called the Chriſtian miracles *dæmonum præſtigias, the charms or feats of dæmons*. But this is nothing to the prejudice of their reality. Under the ſame notion he repreſents the miracles of *Pythagoras*, of whoſe reality he had no doubt, when he tells us, that "by magical charms and incantations "*Pythagoras* relieved people of their bodily diſ-"eaſes (*b*)." For the Heathen, (whom the Papiſts in many inſtances like to imitate) were of opinion, that in matters of religion the correſpondence betwixt heaven and earth, the gods and mankind, was carried on by *Dæmons*; and, in particular, that by their

(z) Προδῆλος τε ὅτι ἐπὶ θεραπείᾳ καὶ εὐεπηςίᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἦκοι· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἀνθρωπόμορφος ἵνα ξενιζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ ὑπερέχον παράσωνται, καὶ τὴν παρ' αὐτοῦ μάθησιν ἀποφεύγωσιν· Jambl de vit. Pythag. cap. 19. § 92.

(*a*) Porph. de vit. Pythag. p. 28.

(*b*) Κάμνοντας δὲ τὰ σώματα ἐθεράπευε, καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς δὲ νοσοῦντας παρεμυθεῖτο, καθάπερ ἔφαμεν, τοὺς μὲν ἐπῳδαῖς καὶ μαγείαις, τοὺς δὲ μουσικῇ· ἦν γὰρ αὐτῷ μέλη καὶ πρὸς νόσους σωμάτων παιώνια, ἃ ἐπᾴδων ἀνίει τοὺς κάμνοντας. Porph. de vit. Pythag. § 33.

their intervention miracles were worked, calling the art or power of working them *Magic* (*c*). So that *Porphyry*, in calling the miracles of *Jeſus*, *the feats of dæmons*, no more doubts of their reality, than he doubted of the reality of the miracles of *Pythagoras*; or than the *Jews* doubted of the reality of the miracles of *Jeſus*, when they aſcribed them to the power of *Beelzebub*: Inaſmuch therefore as *Porphyry* regards the miracles of *Jeſus* as things really performed, he muſt here likewiſe be underſtood to atteſt the truth of the Goſpel-hiſtory. To this let me add (what appears from a paſſage, out of his third book againſt Chriſtians, preſerved by *Euſebius*) that ſo far as it concerns the doctrines of the Goſpel, *Porphyry* does not ſeem to make any exception, but only complains of the expounders of the Scriptures, particularly of *Origen*, that "tho' they lived ac- "cording to the Chriſtian inſtitution, and in con- "tradiction to the public laws, yet, in their ſenti- "ments concerning the Deity and the nature and "exiſtence of things, they followed the *Greek* phi- "loſophy, and employed the *Grecian* learning in "ſupporting foreign and extraneous fables;" plainly

(*c*) Πᾶν τὸ δαιμόνιον μεταξύ ἐστι θεῦ τε καὶ θνητῦ——ἑρμηνεῦον καὶ διαπορθμεῦον θεοῖς τὰ παρ' ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ἀνθρώποις τὰ παρὰ θεῶν, τῶν μὲν τὰς δεήσεις καὶ θυσίας, τῶν δὲ τὰς ἐπιτάξεις τε καὶ ἀμοιβὰς τῶν θυσιῶν. ἐν μέσῳ δὲ ὂν ἀμφοτέρων συμπληροῖ, ὥσε τὸ πᾶν αὐτῷ αὐτῷ ξυνδεδέσθαι· διὰ τύτυ, καὶ ἡ μαντικὴ πᾶσα χωρεῖ, καὶ ἡ τῶν ἱερέων τέχνη, τῶ ντε περὶ τὰς θυσίας καὶ τὰς τελετὰς καὶ τὰς ἐπωδὰς, καὶ τὴν μαντείαν πᾶσαν καὶ γοητείαν· θεὸς δὲ ἀνθρώπῳ ὐ μίγνυται, ἀλλὰ διὰ τύτυ πᾶσά ἐστιν ἡ ὁμιλία, καὶ ἡ διάλεκτος θεοῖς πρὸς ἀνθρώπυς, καὶ ἐγρηγορόσι καὶ κατεύδυσι· Plat. in conviv. p. 202. per Daemonas——cuncta denunciata et Magorum varia miracula, omneſque ...neſagiorum ſpecies reguntur.

ly meaning their allegorical explanations of the holy Scriptures (*d*).

But we are unfortunate, not only in the loſs of *Porphyry*'s books, but in the loſs of thoſe particular anſwers that were made to them by *Methodius*, *Euſebius*, and *Apollinaris*. However, by collecting together ſome few ſcraps which elſewhere we meet withal, one may further judge how he ſtood affected to the Goſpel-hiſtory. And, in general, we learn from *Theodoret*, that, with a deſign to ſhow the world that ſuch a compoſition of things cannot be thought to have come from God, *Porphyry* aſſiduoſly applied himſelf to the reading of the Scriptures (*e*). But, as he found no fault with the doctrines, which he owns conſonant to the *Greek* philoſophy, all his objections muſt have been pointed at ſome particular facts or circumſtances, which, in his opinion, might be ſufficient to ſhew, that the writers of the New Teſtament vainly pretended a commiſſion from Heaven to inſtruct mankind. Thus, upon *Matth.* xiv. 25, 26. where it is reported, that *Jeſus walked on the ſea*, *Porphyry* remarks, that, in order to impoſe a miracle upon ignorant people, the Evangeliſt gives the name of *a ſea* to the Lake of *Geneſareth*. And with reſpect to our Saviour's going

(*d*) Porph. apud Euſeb. hiſt. Eccleſiaſt. lib. 6. cap. 19. Comme Origene avoit beaucoup d'erudition, il fit parôitre, dans ſes Commentaires ſur l'Ecriture, qu'il etoit egalement ſçavant dans l'eſtude des Livres Sacres, & des Auteurs profanes; il aimoit ſur tout les allegories, non ſeulement parce qu'il avoit lû les ouvrages des Philoſophes Platoniciens; mais auſſi parce qu'il crut relever par ce moyen l'Ecriture Sainte, qui paroiſſoit ſimple aux Payens. Ce n'eſt pas qu'il n'eſtimât beaucoup le ſens literale de la Bible; mais il jugea que l'allegorie ſeroit plus utile pour attirer les ſçavans de ces temps-la à la religion Chreſtienne, P. Sim. Hiſt. Critic. de Vet. Teſt. lib. 3. cap. 6.

(*e*) Theodoret. Therap. ſerm. 7.

going up to *Jeruſalem* to the feaſt of Tabernacles, as it is related *John* vii. 8, 10. he alledges, "Chriſt "was here guilty of being fickle and inconſtant;" or, from the Evangeliſt's account of the matter, he is liable to that imputation. He takes notice too of the death of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, as they are reported *Acts* v. 5, 9, 10. and he imputes thoſe events to ſome cruel revengeful imprecations of *Peter*. And upon *Gal.* ii. 2. &c. where we are told that *Paul withſtood Peter to the face*, he repreſents theſe two Apoſtles engaged in a childiſh diſpute, and that *Paul*, envious of *Peter*'s reputation, betrayed an inſolent forwardneſs in reprehending him (*f*). Thus *Porphyry*, as *Euſebius* obſerves, taking exception at none of the doctrines, does in other inſtances calumniate or miſrepreſent the Scriptures (*g*). And we ſee, that in every article, ſo far from denying, he goes upon the truth of the hiſtory. I ſhall only further obſerve, that in the life of *Plotinus*, *Porphyry* lets us know, there were at that time, about the middle of the third century, a great many Chriſtians in *Rome*, where his maſter *Plotinus* then was (*h*).

The next writer againſt Chriſtianity I ſhall mention, is *Celſus*, who ſeems to have flouriſhed about an hundred years after the crucifixion of *Jeſus*. And that this author, in his reaſoning, does likewiſe proceed upon the ſuppoſition of the truth of the hiſtory of the Goſpel, is manifeſt from thoſe paſſages of his,

(*f*) Theſe ſeveral paſſages are taken from Hieronym. Quaeſt. Hebraic. Geneſ. ſub init. lib. 2. adver. Lag. p. 864. ep. 8. ad Demetr. de Virg. Serv. p. 74. proaem. 1. Comment in Gal. Vid. cap. ii. et xi. epiſt 89 ad Auguſtin.

(*g*) Μηδὲν μηδαμῶς φαῦλον ἔγκλημα τοῖς δόγμασιν ἐπιβαλεῖν δυνηθεὶς ἀπορίᾳ λόγων, ἐπὶ τὸ λοιδορεῖν τρέπεται. Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. lib. 6. cap. 19.

† Porph. de vita Plotin. cap. 16.

his, which *Origen* has tranſcribed in his books againſt him. In particular, he takes notice of theſe articles which we find recorded in the Goſpel, and that are ſtill profeſſed by Chriſtians, namely, that *Jeſus* came down from heaven (*g*); that he was ſupernaturally born of a Virgin in a village of *Judea*; that this Virgin's huſband was a Carpenter; that they were admoniſhed by an Angel to fly with the child into *Egypt*; that he returned again from thence (*h*), and went about, thro' the land of *Judea*, attended with ten or eleven perſons, Publicans and Fiſhers (*i*); that he taught moral doctrines againſt revenge, avarice, ambition, *&c.* ſuch as are ſtill extant in the Goſpels (*k*); that he wrought miracles, ſuch as curing the lame and the blind, raiſing the dead, feeding multitudes on a few loaves, *&c.* (*l*); that he was betrayed and forſaken by his diſciples (*m*); that he was crucified along with two malefactors (*n*), in the dread of which he had thus addreſſed himſelf to Heaven, *Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me* (*o*); that as he had foretold his reſurrection, ſo it was given out, he roſe again from the dead, and appeared alive, not to the *Roman* Govern-

(*g*) Orig. contra Celſ. lib. 4. p. 161. 162.
(*h*) Ibid. lib. 1. p. 22. 51. lib. 6. p. 325.
(*i*) Ibid. lib. 1. p. 47.
(*k*) Ibid. lib. 6. p. 286. lib. 7. p. 343, 370.
(*l*) Ibid. lib. 1. p. 53. lib. 2. p. 87, 89, 93.
(*m*) Ibid. lib. 2. p. 62.
(*n*) Ibid. lib. 2. p. 81. 85.
(*o*) Εἰ δέδοκτο αὐτῷ ταῦτα, καὶ τῷ πατρὶ πειθόμενος ἐκολάζετο· δῆλον ὅτι θεῷ γε ὄντι, καὶ βουλομένῳ, ὅτ' ἀλγεινὰ ὅτ' ἀνιαρὰ ἦν τὰ κατὰ γνώμην χρώμενα·——τί ἂν ποτνιᾶται καὶ ὀδύρεται, καὶ τὸν τοῦ ὀλέθρου φόβον ἔυχεται παραδραμεῖν; λέγων ὧδέ πως· ὦ Πάτερ εἰ δύναται τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο παρελθεῖν. Ibid. lib. 2. p. 75. Vid. lib. 7. p. 367.

or, nor to thoſe who had inſulted him, nor to all the people, but to his own Diſciples (*p*); that this *Jeſus*, ſome few years before *Celſus*'s time, was the author or founder of the Chriſtian inſtitution; and that his followers eſteem and worſhip him as God, or the Son of God (*q*). All theſe, and many other particulars reported in the writings of the New Teſtament, has *Origen* tranſcribed from *Celſus*.

It is true, this enemy of the Goſpel does not give out all theſe ſeveral articles as real matters of fact, nor as things that had actually happened. On the contrary, he would repreſent ſome of them as downright lies and forgeries, that deſerve no credit among mankind. But however careful *Celſus* is to ſet every thing in ſuch a light as may beſt anſwer his deſign of expoſing Chriſtianity; yet, from the objections he makes againſt the truth of thoſe particular facts he calls in queſtion, one may eaſily perceive, that nothing is ſaid that in any meaſure can leſſen their certainty; thus he tells us, it is a falſhood that *Jeſus* foretold that *Judas* would betray him, and *Peter* deny him, as it actually came to paſs; for had they been thus forewarned, the premonition would have prevented both one and the other (*r*). As little, ſays he, can it be true, that *Jeſus*

(*p*) Orig. lib. 2. p. 93, 94, 98, 104.

(*q*) Ibid. lib. 1. p. 21. lib. 2. p. 87. lib. 8. p. 385.

(*r*) Πῶς εἴπερ προεῖπε καὶ τὸν προδώσοντα καὶ τὸν ἀρνησάμενον, οὐκ ἂν ὡς θεὸν ἐφοβήθησαν, ὡς τὸν μὲν μὴ προδῶναι ἔτι, τὸν δὲ μὴ ἀρνήσασθαι;——ἤδη γοῦν που καὶ ἄνθρωπος ἐπιβουλεύόμενος τε καὶ προαισθόμενος, ἐὰν προείπῃ τοῖς ἐπιβουλεύουσιν, ἀποτρέπονται καὶ φυλάσσονται——οὐκ ἄν, ἐπειδὴ προείρητο, ταῦτα γέγονεν· ἀδύνατον γὰρ ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ γέγονε, ψεῦδος ἐλέγχεται τὸ προειρηκέναι· πάντῃ γὰρ ἀμήχανον τοὺς προακούσαντας ἔτι προδῶναι καὶ ἀρνήσασθαι· Id. ibid. lib. 2. p. 71. 72.

Jeſus foretold his own death; for had he foreſeen it, he would, no doubt, have done what he could to avoid it, and not voluntarily expoſed himſelf (*s*). Nor, in his opinion, did *Jeſus* by a divine power work miracles: Thoſe wonderful things he performed were only, as he apprehends, the effects of Magic which he had learned in *Egypt* (*t*). And as to his reſurrection; what man, ſays *Celſus*, really dead, did ever ariſe with the ſame body? Or the man who was unable to help himſelf when alive, how could he return to life again, and ſhew the marks of his puniſhment, the wounds he had received in his pierced hands? This article therefore, as he would have it, is a meer fiction, and thoſe who pretend to have been eye-witneſſes, muſt be held, at leaſt, intirely viſionary (*u*). After this manner, to pointed matters of fact, poſſible in their own nature, and atteſted by known witneſſes, does *Celſus* oppoſe empty ſpeculation. And his finding nothing elſe to object, cannot but be counted a plain proof, that the truth of the Goſpel-hiſtory is beyond all reaſonable exception. In ſhort, as *Origen* obſerves, *Celſus* admits the truth of thoſe facts, which, he thinks, he can gloſs to the diſcredit of the Chriſtian inſtitution, and pretends to reject thoſe that would infer its divinity (*x*).

But be his conduct what it will, he affords us certain information, That, about ſuch a time, there were

(*s*) Id. ibid. lib. 2. p. 67, 69, 71.

(*t*) Οὗτος διὰ πενίαν εἰς Αἴγυπτον μισθαρνήσας, κἀκεῖ δυνάμεων τινων πεπαιδευμένος, ἐφ' οἷς Αἰγύπτιοι σεμνύνονται, ἐταπήλθεν ἐν ταῖς δυνάμεσι μέγα φρονῶν, καὶ δι' αὐτὰς θεὸν αὑτὸν ἀπηγόρευσε. Orig. ibid. lib. 1. p. 22, 30. Vid. p. 53. lib. 2. p. 89. &c.

(*u*) Id. ibid. lib. 2. p. 93, 94.

(*x*) Id. ibid. lib. 1. p. 49.

were such persons in the world as *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles; that they taught such moral doctrines; that they wrought such miracles, or did many things out of the ordinary course of nature, which he therefore attributes to their skill in Magic; that *Jesus* was crucified; that it was confidently reported, he rose again from the dead; that a religious sect of men was formed in the world, upon the principles delivered by *Jesus:* And, I say, these particular articles, besides many others, being, by *Celsus*'s own confession, undoubted matters of fact, are sufficient to my present purpose, as they clearly support the credibility of the history of the Gospel.

To this learned Philosopher, let me now add his friend and contemporary *Lucian*, who, after his way, goes about to render the Gospel ridiculous. And this witty author informs us, that *that great Man*, whom the Christians still continue to worship, was crucified in *Palestine*, for introducing that new sect of religion (*y*): That his followers are taught to believe, that after they have renounced the service of the gods, and have come to worship that *crucified Sophist*, and to live according to his laws, they are then all brethren: That their care to succour and relieve one another, when persecuted for their religion, is incredible: That in such circumstances, they spare nothing, but have every thing in common, despising all hardships, dangers of every sort, even death itself, in hopes of immortality (*z*). This is what *Lucian* reports in his account of the death of *Peregrinus*, whom, he tells us, the Priests in *Palestine*

(*y*) Τὸν μέγαν γὰν ἐκεῖνον ἔτι σέβουσιν ἄνθρωπον, τὸν ἐν τῇ Παλαισίνῃ ἀνασκολοπίσθεντα, ὅτι καινὴν ταύτην τελετὴν εἰσήγαγεν ἐς τὸν βίον. Lucian. de morte Peregrin p. 566.

(*z*) Ibid. p. 567.

leſtine had inſtructed in the Chriſtian religion (*a*). And in his *Philoſtratis* (*b*), introducing *Triephon* in the character of a Chriſtian, he makes him inform *Critias*, that we ought to ſwear by "that God who "reigns on high, who is great, immortal, above "in heaven; by the Son of the Father; and by "the Spirit proceeding from the Father; one of "three, and three of one; thoſe we ought to e-"ſteem the only true God (*c*):" That he muſt ſpeak nothing reproachful of the *right-hand God*; plainly alluding to thoſe paſſages of the New Teſtament, where *Chriſt* is ſaid to be *exalted at the right-hand of God* (*d*): That, as for himſelf, he was formerly in the ſame wretched condition with *Critias*, till the bald-pated, big-noſed *Galilean*, who had been *caught up into the third heavens, where he heard things moſt charming and excellent*, happening to meet with him, had renewed him by *water*, meaning *Baptiſm* (*e*); had put him in the way towards the bleſſed, and

(*a*) Ibid. p. 565.

(*b*) Some are of opinion, particularly Huetius, that this Dialogue is not Lucian's, but the production of an earlier writer. And if that be the caſe, we are brought nearer to the time of our Saviour, and have another witneſs in favour of the truth of his hiſtory.

(*c*) Καὶ τίνα ἐπωμόσωμαι γε; Ὑψομέδοντα Θεὸν, μέγαν, ἄμβροτον, ὐρανίωνα· υἱὸν πατρὸς· πνεῦμα ἐκ πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον· ἕν ἐκ τριῶν, ἢ ἐξ ἑνὸς τρία· ταῦτα νόμιζε Ζηνα, τὸν δ' ἠγῆ Θεὸν· Lucian. Philopatr. p. 770. Vid. p. 774.

(*d*) Id. ibid. p. 773.

(*e*) Arrianus (whoſe maſter Epictetus had it in his power to ſee at Rome, in the reign of Nero, the Apoſtles Peter and Paul) ſpeaks of baptized perſons, whom he calls Jews, but who, from this circumſtance of Baptiſm, muſt at the ſame time be reckoned Chriſtians; and tells the world, that after ſuch a manner are thoſe perſons affected, that in their conduct of life they are always conſiſtent, ever ſteady to their principles: So that in his days, when

and redeemed him from the place of the ungodly (*f*): That God from heaven beholds the juſt and the unjuſt, and writes down in books all their actions, to requite every man *on that day he hath appointed:* That foraſmuch as *Chriſt* is come to the Gentiles, what paſſes in *Scythia*, in any part of the world whatever, is likewiſe thus recorded (*g*): That we ought to begin our prayers with the Father (*h*); ſeeming to point at the Lord's prayer: And both *Triephon* and *Critias* allude to St. *Paul*'s explication of the inſcription at *Athens*, *To the unknown God*, whom

when a man's practice did not correſpond with his profeſſion or character, the common ſaying was, "He is not a Jew (a Chriſtian) "but a diſſembler."

Ὅταν τινὰ ἐπαμφοτερίζοντα εἴδωμεν, εἰώθαμεν λέγειν, οὐκ ἔστιν Ιουδαῖος, ἀλλ' ὑποκρίνεται· ὅταν δ' ἀναλάβῃ τὸ πάθος τὸ τοῦ βεβαπτισμένου καὶ ἡρημένου, τότε καὶ ἔστι τῷ ὄντι καὶ καλεῖται Ιουδαῖος· οὕτω καὶ ἡμεῖς παραβαπτιζαὶ, λόγῳ μὲν Ιουδαῖοι, ἔργῳ δ' ἄλλό τι, ἀσυμπαθεῖς πρὸς τὸν λόγον. Arrian. Epict. lib. 2. cap. 9. ſub. fin. This common opinion about the ſteady adherence of Chriſtians to their profeſſion and character, is mentioned by Pliny in his famous letter to Trajan: "Quorum (ſays he) "nihil cogi poſſe dicuntur, qui ſunt revera Chriſtiani." And as Chriſtianity had its riſe in Judea, and was at firſt propagated by thoſe of that nation; this ſeems to have led the Heathen to regard Chriſtians as a Jewiſh ſect, and frequently to give them the name of Jews. Thus they are called by Dio Caſſius, in the paſſage tranſcribed below. But Galen ſeems to expreſs what might be thought their full denomination, when he calls them, as we ſhall ſee immediately, "the Diſciples of Moſes and of Chriſt."

(*f*) Ibid. (*g*) Ibid. p. 771, 773.

(*h*) Ἔασον τούτους, τὴν εὐχὴν ἀπὸ Πατρὸς ἀρξάμενος, καὶ τὴν πολυώνυμον ὧδὲν ἐς τέλος ἐπιθεὶς Ibid. p. 779. This hint of Lucian's, about a multinominal Ode, gives us to underſtand, that in the primitive church the cuſtom was, to conclude their prayers with an hymn or Doxology. Vid. Conſt. Apoſt. lib. 8. cap. 12.

whom they now conceive to be discovered (*i*). From *Lucian* we likewise learn, that the Christians were extremely obnoxious to the public *odium*; that they were grievously reproached, being held equally impious with Atheists and Epicureans, and together with them excommunicated from the public mysteries (*k*).

Thus the most eager writers against Christianity, who had some of them access to converse with those who had seen and heard the Apostles, afford us ample proof, that Christians were in being more than 1700 years ago; and that their original history, related in the New Testament, can be no forged composition of a later age. But while some laid out their wit, to reason, or to banter Christianity out of the world; others were employed to suppress it, by the barbarous arguments of fire and sword, by all the cruelties of persecution. And from hence likewise we

(*i*) Νὴ τὸν Ἄγνωσον ἐν Ἀθήναις·——Ἡμεῖς δ' τὸν ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἄγνωσον ἐφευρόντες, καὶ προσκυνήσαντες, χεῖρας εἰς οὐρανὸν ἐκτείναντες, τούτῳ εὐχαριστήσομεν· Ibid. p. 769, 780.

(*k*) Some persons of integrity and prudence going about to expose Alexander's imposture, he complains, Ἀθέων ἐμπεπλῆσθαι καὶ Χριστιανῶν τὸν Πόντον, οἱ περὶ αὐτῷ τολμῶσι τὰ κάκιστα βλασφημεῖν· ὃς ἐκέλευε λίθοις ἐλαύνειν, εἴγε ἐθέλουσιν ἵλεω ἔχειν τὸν θεόν· And having instituted mysteries that were to be celebrated for three days, ἐν μὲν τῇ πρώτῃ, πρόρρησις ἦν, ὥσπερ Ἀθήνησι, τοιαύτη· Εἴ τις ἄθεος, ἢ Χριστιανὸς, ἢ Ἐπικούρειος, ἥκει κατάσκοπος τῶν ὀργίων, φευγέτω· οἱ δὲ πιστεύοντες τῷ θεῷ, τελείσθωσαν τύχῃ τῇ ἀγαθῇ· εἶτ' εὐθὺς ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐξέλασις ἐγίγνετο· καὶ ὁ μὲν ἡγεῖτο λέγων, Ἔξω Χριστιανός· τὸ δὲ πλῆθος ἐπεφθέγγετο, Ἔξω Ἐπικούρειος· Then went on the mysteries, wherein was represented the fable of Latona's bringing forth Apollo, &c. and Alexander's own amours with the moon. Lucian. Pseudmant. p. 762, 770.

we are led to the certain knowledge of the existence of Christianity, and to perceive the truth of the history of the Gospel.

Libanius informs us, that in order to recover people from their attachment to the Christian religion, the Emperor *Julian* not only gave the world a fine example, in his devotion towards the Gods, Heroes, Heaven, Æther, Earth, Sea, Fountains, Rivers (*l*); but he endeavoured to engage people to return to Heathenism, by reason and argument, by banter and ridicule; and, when these could not prevail, he made use of money to persuade them. And such gentle means this Emperor employed, not only from his apprehending that a man's conscience cannot be forced, but from his being sensible, that the cruelties which, before his time, had been exercised, had rather furthered than hindered the progress of Christianity. So that *Libanius* here gives us to understand, that in former reigns, meaning those before *Constantine*, Christians, for the sake of their religion, by a variety of torments, whereof he gives some instances, had been cruelly harassed and persecuted (*m*).

And, indeed, if we look back into the situation of mankind during those reigns, the case will appear, as *Libanius* reports it, not only under the worst, but under those they reckon their best Emperors: Nor does the case seem to have happened seldom, since, long before *Libanius*, *Ulpian* the great *Roman* lawyer, who flourished in the beginning of the third century, took up no less than seven books in collecting

(*l*) Οὐκ ἐθεράπευσε μεγαλοπρεπῶς Θεὺς, Ἥρωας, Οὐρανὸν, Αἰθέρα, Γῆν, Θάλατταν, Πηγάς, Ποταμούς; οὐκ ἐπολέμησε τοῖς ὑμῖν πεπολεμηκόσιν; Liban. Parental. in Julian. cap. 144. Vid. Ælian. var. hist. lib. 2. cap. 33. lib. 12. cap. 61.

(*m*) Ibid. cap. 58, 59, 81. What is here said against persecution, may put many Christians to the blush.

lecting the Imperial edicts, which, before his time, had been made againſt Chriſtians (*n*). Thus the tranquillity of the world, with reſpect to matters of religion, was diſturbed, and the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity came to be hardly uſed and perſecuted in the reign of *M. Antoninus Philoſophus*. And ſo remarkably firm and reſolute were Chriſtians in adhering to their faith, and in ſuffering every thing for the ſake of it, that not only the Emperor himſelf takes notice of it, whilſt, in his *Meditations*, he eſteems it meer obſtinacy, and cautions the world againſt it (*o*); but *Celſus* too ſeems to have in his eye the

 behaviour

(*n*) Domitius de officio Proconſulis, libris ſeptem Reſcripta Principum nefaria collegit, ut doceret, quibus poenis affici oporteret eos, qui ſe cultores Dei confiterentur. Lactan. Inſt. lib. 5. cap. 11.

(*o*) Οἷα ἐσιν ἡ ψυχὴ ἡ ἕτοιμος, ἐὰν ἤδη ἀπολυθηναι, δέη τὺ σώματος, ἢ ἥτοι σβεσθῆναι, ἢ σκεδασθῆναι, ἢ συμμεῖναι; τὸ δὲ ἕτοιμον τῦτο, ἵνα ἀπὸ ἰδικῆς κρίσεως ἔρχηται, μὴ κατὰ ψιλὴν παράταξιν, ὡς οἱ Χριστιανοὶ, ἀλλὰ λελογισμένως, ἢ σεμνῶς, ἢ ὥσε ἢ ἄλλον πεῖσαι, ἀτραγῴδως. M. Anton. lib. xi. § 3.

This Emperor came at length to be very indulgent towards Chriſtians. Juſtin Martyr's Apology did not indeed ſave his own life, or put a ſtop to the perſecuting of others. But Melito addreſſed the Emperor in another apology: And many Governors of Provinces having writ to him concerning the Chriſtians; ſuch, it ſeems, were the accounts he received, that, in his Reſcripts, following the moderate meaſures which his father Antoninus Pius came in time to obſerve, he gave command, that "no Chriſtian, "without being guilty of a crime againſt the Government, ſhould "be diſturbed." And when this was found inſufficient to reſtrain the malice of their enemies, he cauſed publiſh an edict in the common Council of Aſia, "That thoſe who ſhould be accu"ſed as Chriſtians, without having any other crime laid againſt "them, ſhall be acquitted from the charge, and the accuſers pu"niſhed." Vid. Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. lib. 4. cap. 13. Euſebius is miſtaken in making Antoninus Pius the author of this Letter.

We

behaviour of Chriſtians in this perſecution, whilſt he upbraids them with abſurdity, in ſetting ſo great a value on their bodies, as to expect for them a reſurrection; and yet, at the ſame time, to be throwing them away in ſufferings, as if they were things vile and contemptible: Withal, he tells them, that their hopes of any ſort are extremely ill founded; for ſo little was God concerned in their intereſt, that "they were dragged out of their concealments, and "brought to the hands of the executioner (*p*)." Nor was it any thing elſe but their unſhaken conſtancy amidſt perſecutions, that gave occaſion to the renowned *Galen*, who was now flouriſhing, and muſt therefore have been a witneſs of their ſufferings, to mark out the ſteadineſs of Chriſtians in their profeſſion, as a pitch of obſtinacy wholly impregnable; while he ſays, "One may ſooner pre-"vail with the followers of *Chriſt* to change their "principles, than with thoſe Phyſicians and Philo-"ſophers who are engaged in ſects (*q*)."

But looking ſtill backwards beyond the days of this Emperor, into thoſe of *Trajan*, who came into the world about twenty years after the death of our Lord; in his reign we ſhall likewiſe find that Chriſtians were involved, meerly on account of their religion, in a very ſevere perſecution. Of this we have abundant proof from *Pliny*, who was himſelf concerned as an agent in the matter. This *Roman*

We have an account of Melito's Apology preſented to Antoninus Philoſophus, and of the particular cities to which Antoninus Pius ſent his Reſcripts in favour of the Chriſtians. Euſeb. lib. ſup. cap. 26.

(*p*) Orig. contr. Celſ. lib. 8. p. 409, 423.

(*q*) Θᾶττον γὰρ ἄν τις τὺς ἀπὸ Μωϋσῆ ϗ Χρηςῆ μεταδιδάξειεν, ἢ τὺς ταῖς αἱρέσεσι προσετηκότας ἰατρύς τε ϗ φιλοσόφυς. Gal. de Pulſuum different. lib. 3.

man Senator, when Governor of *Bithynia*, in his *Letter to Trajan*, a moſt valuable piece of antiquity, tells the Emperor, That "the temples and altars of "the gods were every where, in town and country, "almoſt totally deſerted." From whence we learn, that within the compaſs of a few years the Goſpel muſt have made a wonderful progreſs. At the ſame time *Pliny* reports, that among thoſe that were accuſed, and whom he had examined, there were ſome who confeſſed they had been Chriſtians, but that twenty years ago they had forſaken that profeſſion; avowing, however, that the height of their crime was, their being wont, on a ſtated day, before it was light, to aſſemble together, in order "to ſing a Pſalm to *Chriſt* as God, and to bind "themſelves by a Sacrament to commit no wic-"kedneſs (*r*)."

Thus we ſee what were the principles and practice of Chriſtians ſo many years before, and at the time of *Trajan*'s perſecution, which happened about ſeventy years after our Lord's paſſion. And, no doubt, *Pliny* had good information about thoſe particular matters of fact, upon which the Chriſtians founded

(*r*) Plin. lib. 10. Epiſt. 97. This I ſhall have occaſion to tranſcribe afterwards. Here, ſince it likewiſe ſhews us the being and ſituation of Chriſtianity at that time, I ſhall inſert Trajan's anſwer to Pliny.

"Actum quem debuiſti, mi Secunde, in excutiendis cauſis eo-"rum, qui Chriſtiani ad te delati fuerant, ſequutus es. Neque "enim in univerſum aliquid, quod quaſi certam formam habeat, "conſtitui poteſt. Conquerendi non ſunt: Si deferantur et ar-"guantur, puniendi ſunt: Ita tamen ut qui negaverit ſe Chri-"ſtianum eſſe, idque re ipſa manifeſtum fecerit, id eſt, ſupplican-"do diis noſtris, quamvis ſuſpectus in praeteritum fuerit, veniam "ex poenitentia impetret. Sine auctore vero propoſiti libelli, "nullo crimine locum habere debent. Nam et peſſimi exempli, "nec noſtri ſaeculi eſt." Ibid. Epiſt. 98. Vid. Tertull. Apolog. cap. 2.

founded their profeſſion. His uncle, the elder *Pliny*, a learned man, and mighty inquiſitive, was about ten years old when our Saviour was crucified, and about forty when the Chriſtians were perſecuted under *Nero*; ſo that, having adopted his nephew, and held the direction of his education till he was about ſeventeen years of age, it cannot well be thought but he informed him concerning that ſect, which was ſtill continuing to make a conſiderable noiſe in the world, and could not therefore, at that time, but frequently prove the ſubject of common converſation. And, not to mention the other opportunities which *Pliny* himſelf had at *Rome*, to learn the hiſtory of the Chriſtian religion, and how much his curioſity muſt have been awakened, particularly, after his uncle's death, during *Domitian*'s perſecution, which cut off and baniſhed great numbers of people, and even thoſe of the higheſt rank, ſuch as *Flavius Clemens*, who, in the time of his Conſulſhip, was put to death; and his wife *Domitilla*, nearly related, as well as her huſband, to *Domitian*, who was baniſhed; to whom *Dio* adds *Glabrio*, a perſon of Conſular dignity, who was likewiſe capitally puniſhed (*s*): I ſay, not to mention *Pliny*'s other oportunities, and how much ſuch events muſt have awakened his curioſity; when he was in his government of *Bithynia*

(*s*) Καὶ τῷ ἀτῷ ἔτει ἄλλους τε πολλοὺς καὶ τὸν Φάβιον Κλήμεντα ὑπατεύοντα, καὶ περ ἀνεψίον ὄντα, καὶ γυναῖκα καὶ αὐτὴν συγγενῆ ἑαυτοῦ Φλαβίαν Δομιτίλλαν ἔχοντα, κατέσφαξεν ὁ Δομιτιανὸς· ἐπηνέχθη δὲ ἀμφοῖν ἔγκλημα ἀθεότητος· ὑφ' ἧς καὶ ἄλλοι εἰς τὰ τῶν Ιουδαίων ἤδη ἐξοκέλλοντες πολλοὶ κατεδικάσθησαν· καὶ οἱ μὲν ἀπέθανον, οἱ δὲ τῶν γῶν ὑστιῶν ἐστερήθησαν. ἡ δὲ Δομιτίλλα ὑπερωρίσθη μόνον εἰς Πανδατέρειαν· τὸν δὲ δὴ Γλαβρίωνα τὸν μετὰ τοῦ Τραϊανοῦ ἄρξαντα, κατηγορηθέντα τά τε ἄλλα καὶ ὅια οἱ πολλοὶ——ἀπέκτεινεν· Dio Caſſ. lib. 67. Xiphil. in Domitian. p. 236. D.

nia (among the Eaſtern Churches, where there were infinite numbers of Chriſtians) and was there, in good earneſt, attempting to check the progreſs of Chriſtianity; he ſeems to have had acceſs to the faireſt means of information. For, not to ſpeak of other Chriſtians in thoſe parts, who muſt have ſeen and converſed with the Apoſtles (which we know was the caſe of *Polycarp* in particular, at that time Biſhop of *Smyrna*, and univerſally famous) and were therefore capable to afford one a clear account of the hiſtory of our Saviour: It is to be obſerved, that among the ſtrangers to whom St. *Peter* writes his two Epiſtles, thoſe of *Bithynia* are particularly mentioned. And as from ſome circumſtances in thoſe Epiſtles, there is reaſon to apprehend, that this Apoſtle travelled into all thoſe ſeveral parts, whither he ſent his letters; ſo from Eccleſiaſtical Writers we underſtand, that as in others, ſo he was certainly in the Province of *Bithynia* (*t*): Where *Silvanus a faithful brother*, who carried the firſt Epiſtle, muſt queſtionleſs have been; and where likewiſe the Apoſtle St. *Andrew*, and the Evangeliſt St. *Luke*, are ſaid to have preached the Goſpel. So that thoſe very perſons who told *Pliny*, that twenty years ago they had renounced Chriſtianity, may reaſonably be counted among thoſe who ſaw and converſed with the firſt publiſhers of the Goſpel. Beſides, that St. *Luke* ſpending the laſt of his days, as it is reported, in *Bithynia*; neither he nor St. *Andrew* came to be martyred till *Domitian*'s perſecution: The ſeverity of which, it is highly probable, tempted thoſe *Bithynians* to prove Apoſtates. Such, I ſay, were the means of information which *Pliny* had acceſs to purſue. Nor did he fail to make a narrow ſcrutiny; nay,

(*t*) Πέτρος δὲ πολλάκις Ποντον τε καὶ Βιθυνίαν ἐπεσκέψατο. Epiph. adv. Haereſ. lib. 1. tom. 2. p. 107.

nay, he proceeded to the moſt rigorous inquiſition poſſible; and yet, after all his endeavours to get to the bottom of the matter, being able to diſcover no forgery, no criminal deſign of any ſort, he was contented to regard the whole as an extravagant ſuperſtition, in which, for their ſtubborn inflexible obſtinacy, he thought Chriſtians juſtly deſerved puniſhment. *Neque enim dubitabam*, ſays he, *qualecunque eſſet quod faterentur, pervicaciam certe et inflexibilem obſtinationem debere puniri.*

But, at ſome diſtance back from this, within about thirty years of the crucifixion of our Saviour, there happened under *Nero* a moſt cruel perſecution mentioned by *Suetonius* (*u*); but whereof we have a more particular account from his contempory *Tacitus*, who ſeems to have been about fifteen years of age at the death of *Nero*, and muſt therefore be counted an eye-witneſs of this perſecution, and might have ſeen and converſed with the Apoſtles *Peter* and *Paul*, who therein, at *Rome*, ſuffered martyrdom. And from this celebrated Hiſtorian we underſtand, not only what were the horrid cruelties, the dreadful torments, amidſt which the poor Chriſtians were then barbarouſly put to death, but that their numbers in Rome were at that time very conſiderable (*x*). Now this bringing us very near to the time when *Jeſus* was crucified; I ſhall conclude this branch

(*u*) In Nero, cap. 16.

(*x*) As from thoſe great numbers of Chriſtians then in the city of Rome, one is led to apprehend that Chriſtianity muſt have had a being before the days of Nero: So going on from his reign, and coming immediately up to that of Claudius, who ſucceeded in the empire in the eight year after the crucifixion; we find there were likewiſe Chriſtians in Rome during the reign of this Emp ror. For, as Suetonius informs us, "Claudius baniſhed the Jews from Rome, becauſe of the diſturbances they were continually

branch of the evidence with the account of things which *Tacitus* gives us, when he is about to explain this persecution under *Nero*. And this Historian expressly reports, That Christianity had its rise in *Judea*;

" continually making under the instigation of Christ;" *i. e.* from their different sentiments concerning him. " Judaeos, im-" pulsore Chresto, assidue tumultuantes Roma expulit." In Claud. cap. 25.

I confess, some are of opinion, that this passage has no relation to Jesus Christ. It is this difference that makes me mention this testimony only in the margin. And I shall here give the reasons that induce me to understand it concerning our Saviour.

It is indeed certain, that Claudius banished from Rome only those of the Jewish nation; and that they were banished, not on any religious account whatsoever, but purely because of the continual tumults they were raising. It cannot however be denied, that at that time there were in Rome many Christians. This is evident from the vast numbers that were there in the reign of Nero, who came to the empire about two or three years after this banishment: It is evident from St. Paul's Epistle to the Saints, Jews and Gentiles, in Rome, whose faith was then spoken of throughout the whole world; and yet this Epistle was writ within six years after the Jews had been banished; so that before this time, as appears likewise from the contexture of the Epistle, and the particular salutations at the end of it, many of them must have returned to Rome: It is directly evident from Acts xviii. 2. where we learn, that this banishment brought from Rome to Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla, two Christians of a distinguished character. I say, therefore, one cannot well doubt but that in the reign of Claudius, there were in Rome many Christians of the Jewish nation. And, as I have hinted, we must here understand Sueton to inform us, that those disturbances among the Jews, which occasioned their being banished, had their rise from their different sentiments concerning Jesus Christ. This, I am sure, is in no degree improbable: Nay, as the Jews in Rome could not but have different sentiments, and as those sentiments could not but prove so violent as greatly to endanger the public peace, and, in the present article, no other cause of its disturbance can be assigned, it rather seems morally certain.

For, as it is reported by Justin Martyr and Eusebius, " The " chief Priests and Rulers of the Jews, after the resurrection and " ascension of Jesus, wrote letters and dispatched messengers from " Jerusalem

dea; That the profeſſors of it had their name from *Chriſt*; That this *Chriſt*, in the reign of *Tiberius*, was put to death by *Pontius Pilate*; and that this religion,

" Jeruſalem every where thro' the world, in order to inform their " countrymen of what had happened, and to guard them againſt " favouring that new Atheiſtical ſect which had ariſen among " them; reproaching the Chriſtians with many things, and par- " ticularly with what St. Matthew has recorded, that his diſci- " ples ſtole away the dead body, and thereupon pretended he " was riſen from the dead, and had aſcended into heaven." Μετὰ γὰρ τὸ σαυρῶσαι ὑμᾶς ἐκεῖνον τὸν μόνον ἄμωμον ἄνθρωπον——ἐπειδὴ ἐγνώκατε αὐτὸν ἀναστάντα ἐκ νεκρῶν, καὶ ἀναβάντα εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν——ἄνδρας ἐκλεκτοὺς ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐκλεξάμενοι τότε ἐξεπέμψατε εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν, λέγοντες αἵρεσιν ἄθεον Χριστιανῶν πεφηνέναι, καταλέγοντες ταῦτα ἅπερ καθ' ἡμῶν οἱ ἀγνοοῦντες ἡμᾶς πάντες λέγουσιν Juſt. m. Dial. cum Tryph. p. 234. Vid. p. 335. Thus likewiſe Euſebius upon Iſaiah xviii. 1. 2. Εὕρομεν ἐν τοῖς τῶν παλαιῶν συγγράμμασιν ὡς οἱ τὴν Ἱερουσαλὴμ οἰκοῦντες τοῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθνους ἱερεῖς καὶ πρεσβύτεροι, γράμματα διαχαράξαντες εἰς πάντα διεπέμψαντο τὰ ἔθνη τοῖς ἁπανταχοῦ Ἰουδαίοις διαβάλλοντες τὴν Χριστοῦ διδασκαλίαν ὡς αἵρεσιν καινὴν καὶ ἀλλοτρίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ· παρήγγελόν τε δι' ἐπιστολῶν μὴ παραδέξασθαι αὐτήν.

Now, there is pretty good evidence, that at the time when the crucifixion happened in Jeruſalem, there were many of the Jewiſh nation reſiding in Rome. We know for certain, that from the days of Cicero and Julius Cæſar, to thoſe of Tiberius, there were great numbers of Jews inhabiting that city. (Vid. Cic. pro Flac. cap. 28. Suet. in Jul. Cæſ. cap. 84.) And altho' in the reign of Tiberius, the Jews and their proſelytes were baniſhed from Rome, under the pain of becoming ſlaves. (Vid. Suet. in Tiber. cap. 36.) Yet ſince that Emperor, upon underſtanding the falſeneſs of the crimes laid againſt them, immediately after the death of Sejanus, which happened, A. D. xxxi. was pleaſed ſo far to repair the wrong they had ſuffered, as to give them liberty to return. (Vid. Phil. de leg. ad Cai. p. 698.) There is no queſtion but that, before the crucifixion of Jeſus, they came again to be there very numerous. And as one cannot poſſibly imagine that the

gion, after the death of its Author, over-run not only *Judea*, but the city of *Rome* (*y*). Here, then,

the chief priests neglected to send their letters or messengers to that imperial city where there were so many of their countrymen; so the Jews at Rome having received such notices concerning that new sect which had appeared in Jerusalem; those of them who zealously adhered to their national constitution, believing the information that was sent them, could not but conceive, as one may judge from the common temper of that people, a most inveterate malice against such of their brethren, and the proselytes to their religion, as should embrace Christianity, an impious plot, as they imagined, to overturn the whole structure of their nation and religion. And under such apprehensions, at first strongly impressed, and still kept alive or growing deeper by opposition, is it any wonder the Jews should prove tumultuous? How apt those people were to raise disturbances in foreign places from their opposition to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, one may learn from Acts xiv. xvii. xviii. And the moderation they observed towards St. Paul at Rome, while they said unto him, "We neither received letters "out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that "came shewed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to "here of thee what thou thinkest: For as concerning this sect, "we know that every where it is spoken against, *&c.*" Acts xxviii. 21. &c. I say, this calm moderate behaviour, so very different from their common temper and course of acting, seems in a great measure to have arisen from the memory of those troubles wherein they had involved themselves in the reign of Claudius, thro' their violence in opposing the Christian profession.

It is true, as Suetonius writes the name, he may seem to mean some other person than Christ. But both Greeks and Romans were in use to write the name of our Saviour. This appears from the quotation above transcribed from Galen: The same is evident from Lucian in his Philopatris or Catechumen, Ἀλλά μοι τόδε εἰπὲ εἰ ἢ τὰ τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἐγχαράττεται; Πάντα, εἰ τύχοι γε Χρηστὸς ἢ ἐν ἔθνεσι. And says Lactantius, lib. 4. cap. 7. "Sed exponenda hujus nominis ratio est propter ignoran-"tium errorem, qui cum, immutata litera, Chrestum solent di-"cere." Vid. Tertul. Apol. cap. 3. I cannot therefore but here profess, I see nothing to prevent our resting assured, that Suetonius,

(*y*) Tacit. Annal. lib. 15. cap. 44. These passages in Sueton and Tacitus the Reader will find written out in Sect. xx.

Tacitus points out to us the place, the time, the Author, and firſt riſe of Chriſtianity. And certain it is, that, if we look farther back into the religious ſtate of mankind, beyond the reign of *Tiberius*, we ſhall find nothing of Chriſtianity, no veſtige of any ſet of men, who, in their religious principles, oppoſed the ſuperſtition of the Jews, and the idolatry of the nations; but both Jews and Gentiles were in peaceable poſſeſſion of all their ſeveral religious ſentiments.

I would only now obſerve, That, ſo late as in the reign of *Trajan*, there were alive not only apoſtolical men, the immediate Diſciples of the Apoſtles, ſuch as *Clemens*, whom St. *Paul* mentions in his Epiſtles (z), *Ignatius*, *Polycarp*, &c. but the Apoſtle *John* himſelf, and *Simeon* one of the ſeventy, ſent forth in our Saviour's life-time to publiſh the Goſpel, and a near kinſman of our Lord: So that, at that diſtance of time, inquiſitive men, ſuch as *Tacitus*, *Sueton*, *Pliny*, who mention Chriſtian affairs, had acceſs to the ſureſt means of information. And (the Apoſtle *John* and *Clemens Romanus* having died before, and *Simeon* and *Ignatius* being martyred in, *Trajan*'s perſecution) thoſe means, in ſome meaſure, were continued in *Polycarp*, as far down as *M. Antoninus Philoſophus*, under whoſe reign *Polycarp* at *Smyrna*, and the Philoſopher *Juſtin* at *Rome*, were crowned with martyrdom, when *Celſus* and *Lucian* were flouriſhing. But all the *Roman* Provinces, during the firſt ages of the Goſpel, having had frequent intercourſe

nius, in this paſſage, meant our Saviour. And as by this evidence we are brought within about ſixteen years of the crucifixion; ſo we are clearly taught, that the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, very ſoon after its firſt promulgation in Jeruſalem, had made its way to the city of Rome, and was there openly avowed.

(z) Philip. iv. 3.

intercourſe one with another, but more eſpecially with the city of *Rome*, the ſeat of the empire, and therefore the common centre of correſpondence, every man of ſenſe, that would take the trouble to inquire, had eaſy acceſs to inform himſelf about the certainty of whatever was ſaid to have been tranſacted in any part of the *Roman* dominions. And, no doubt, inquiſitive men would ſoon have diſcovered the cheat, had there been no ſuch perſon as *Jeſus Chriſt*, or had there been any falſhood in the reports concerning him and his Apoſtles. Nor can it be thought but the vaſt multitudes of Chriſtians, that appeared in Rome, in every capital and great city, within a ſhort time of the crucifixion, and every where diſtinguiſhed by the public hatred as a moſt impious ſet of men, would give occaſion to people of the beſt underſtanding, to inquire into their hiſtory; which we have all the reaſon in the world to reſt ſatisfied (nay, in fact it appears) they certainly did.

Thus, beginning at the preſent age, wherein we have ſenſible demonſtration for the exiſtence of Chriſtianity, and carrying our inquiries backwards from one age to another, we meet with unqueſtionable evidence in every age, for the real being of that inſtitution, till we arrive to that particular time when it firſt appeared in the world: And one cannot but confeſs, that as certainly as we know, that in thoſe ages the earth was inhabited, that the inhabitants were divided in ſuch particular governments, and that the adminiſtration of thoſe governments was carried on by ſuch particular laws; as certainly do we know, that the Chriſtian religion, without interruption, continually ſubſiſted in all the intermediate ages that lie between the preſent time and the reign of *Tiberius Cæſar*, when *Jeſus Chriſt* was by *Pontius*

Pontius Pilate cut off, or crucified at *Jeruſalem.* And as this long uninterrupted continuance of the Goſpel; as its overſpreading the *Roman* empire, and making its way to other nations, in its three firſt centuries, amidſt perſecutions, without any earthly power to ſupport it; as its maintaining its ground to this very day; are effects that could not poſſibly have exiſted without an adequate cauſe; ſo what cauſe can be judged ſufficient, but that which is explained in the Goſpel, and which neceſſarily implies the truth of the matters of fact therein related?

I would therefore hope, that my demand will not be deemed unreaſonable, when I aſk, that what credit is given to the writings of *Tacitus*, *Sueton*, &c. the ſame may be allowed to the writings of the New Teſtament, the original books of Chriſtianity, which Chriſtians, in all ages, have underſtood to contain a true narration of things, the firſt books that ever appeared in the world with a new ſyſtem of religion, putting an end to all other inſtitutions, whether among Jews or Gentiles. And, in fact, I have made it appear, that what the New Teſtament reports, is well atteſted by Heathen Authors, inveterate enemies to the Chriſtian cauſe, namely, that there were in the world ſuch perſons as *Jeſus Chriſt* and his Apoſtles; that they taught ſuch particular doctrines; that they wrought miracles; and that very ſoon after *Jeſus* was crucified, the report went current among his diſciples, that he was riſen again from the dead. Nor can ſuch matters of fact be rejected, but by thoſe arguments that would overthrow the whole truth of all hiſtory, or ruin the credit of every matter of fact, for which we have not the immediate teſtimony of our ſenſes; and conſequently put a final end to all human ſociety and correſpondence.

Hitherto,

Hitherto, becauſe its genuineneſs is ſtill debated among learned men, I have not mentioned that famous teſtimony of *Joſephus* concerning *Jeſus Chriſt*. However, ſince I am, myſelf, pretty much ſatisfied as to its truth, or that it is the genuine production of *Joſephus*, and ſince Mr. *Daubuz*, in his excellent book on that ſubject, has ſet its genuineneſs in ſo ſtrong a light, ſufficient, I really think, to ſatisfy any reaſonable man, I cannot but indulge myſelf the pleaſure here to tranſcribe it. And this notable teſtimony from *Joſephus*, who was co-temporary with the Apoſtles, is thus, " About that time, ſays he, " appeared *Jeſus*, who was a wiſe man, if one can " call him a man, for he was a worker of miracles; " and inſtructing thoſe who delight in truth, gained " many Diſciples, both among *Jews* and *Gentiles*. " This was *Chriſt*. And altho', at the inſtigation " of the chief men among us, *Pilate* condemned him " to be crucified, yet the devotion of his followers " did not fail: For, on the third day, he again ap- " peared to them alive; the holy Prophets having " publiſhed thoſe and many other wonderful things " concerning him; and, to this day, the ſect of " Chriſtians, ſo called from him, is ſtill ſubſiſting(*a*)." This is evidence very ſtrong, intirely in point, and its

(*a*) Γίνεται δὲ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον Ἰησοῦς σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, εἴγε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρή· ἦν γὰρ παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητὴς, διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῇ τἀληθῆ δεχομένων, καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν Ἰουδαίους πολλοὺς δὲ Ἑλληνικοὺς ἐπηγάγετο· ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν· καὶ αὐτὸν ἐνδείξει τῶν πρώτων ἀνδρῶν παρ' ἡμῖν, σταυρῷ ἐπιτετιμηκότος Πιλάτου, οὐκ ἐπαύσαντο οἱ γε πρῶτον ἀγαπήσαντες· ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν πάλιν ζῶν, τῶν θείων προφητῶν ταῦτα καὶ ἄλλα μυρία θαυμάσια περὶ αὐτοῦ εἰρηκότων· εἰς τε νῦν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀπὸ τοῦδε ὠνομασμένων οὐκ ἀπέλιπε τὸ φῦλον· Archaeol. lib. 18. cap. 4.

its pointedneſs ſeems to be the cauſe that raiſes the ſuſpicion in people's breaſts, that it is the forgery of ſome unworthy Chriſtian. But, when one conſiders the connection, which *Joſephus* very well knew, *John Baptiſt* and St. *James*, one of the writers of the New Teſtament, had with *Jeſus Chriſt*, and how very honourably he makes mention of both theſe perſons, one needs not much wonder at the fulneſs of this teſtimony; nor can one well imagine what elſe, in conſequence of his extreme good opinion of the Forerunner, and the Diſciple and Brother of *Chriſt*, one could have expected from him. But, as to this, the Reader may believe as he pleaſes. Without any regard to this teſtimony, I have briefly explained the reaſons upon which one cannot but admit the truth of the hiſtory of the Goſpel. And it appears, that thoſe very facts mentioned by *Joſephus*, are by Heathen writers, either expreſsly confeſſed, or allowed to have been reported by the Apoſtles: So that therein *Joſephus* only teſtifies what we are informed of from *Tacitus*, *Celſus*, *Julian*, and other enemies of the Chriſtian inſtitution.

Before I conclude this Article, I muſt obſerve, that the Evangelical hiſtory is ſupported by the teſtimony of another ſet of men, whoſe evidence ſeems to be more valuable than that of thoſe other Heathens hitherto mentioned. There is indeed no ſhadow of reaſon to ſuſpect, that *Tacitus*, *Pliny*, or any other Pagan author, would tell a known falſehood, far leſs forge any point of hiſtory, to the advantage of the Chriſtian inſtitution: But it is very poſſible for people to be in ſuch circumſtances, wherein their belief, and confeſſion of facts, may ariſe from a far more penetrating conviction. Thus, if upon the truth of certain facts, a man deliberately ventures the forfeiture of all his preſent enjoyments, and

and runs the hazard of being involved in all the calamities of life; what other conſtruction can be put on this conduct, but that the man, if he be not quite out of his ſenſes, is fully appriſed of the importance of thoſe facts, and, at the bottom of his ſoul, is irreſiſtibly convinced of their reality, by the moſt over-bearing evidence? To be ſure, the evidence upon which a wiſe man acts, will always be proportional to the ſtake he ventures. Now, this was the caſe of thoſe Heathens, who left the religion of their country, wherein they had been educated, and embraced the profeſſion of Chriſtianity. Nor was it the multitude only that acted this part, but men of learning and philoſophy, whoſe main buſineſs was to ſearch after truth, and the deſign of whoſe ſtudies was to perceive things as they are in themſelves, and to form a judgment of them upon rational evidence. And what ſtronger teſtimony can one have, or deſire to have, than from the mouths of perſons of good ſenſe and learning, whoſe education, and courſe of life, ſet them in direct oppoſition to the influence of thoſe facts they atteſt; who came not to be convinced of their certainty, but upon their own deliberate re-ſearches; and who, in aſſuring the truth of them, are ſo far from ſerving any preſent intereſt, that thereby they expoſe themſelves to contempt and hatred, to poverty, to every evil of life, to death itſelf? Of ſuch witneſſes I might inſtance in a great many; but I ſhall only mention the following:

Quadratus, a learned Heathen, having embraced the Chriſtian religion, ſo zealous was he in its propagation, that he travelled through the world for that purpoſe: When it was perſecuted, he durſt avow it; he wrote in its defence, and preſented his Apology to the Emperor *Adrian:* (as *Ariſtides* did one of his

his too about the same time, another learned man, famed for his philosophy at *Athens*, who had likewise left Paganism, and gone over to Christianity.) Of this Apology of *Quadratus* there only now remains a small fragment in *Eusebius*, wherein the Author expresses himself thus, "As to the works, says he, of "our Saviour, they were of a lasting nature; for "they were real and true: Such as, persons healed "of their diseases, and raised from the dead, who "appeared and were seen, not only at the time "of their being healed and raised, but long after-"wards, during the time our Saviour was upon "earth, nay, for a considerable time after his de-"parture; so that some of them were living in our "days*."

Next to *Quadratus* I shall mention *Justin Martyr*, well known in the Christian world. This Philosopher flourished in the two reigns after *Adrian*; and so great was his passion for truth, that, in search of it, he carefully sifted all the several opinions of the different sects of Philosophers; nor could his mind any where take up its rest, or be fully satisfied, till he came to the knowledge of the Christian religion, which he heartily embraced, and in defence of which he wrote several very excellent pieces. In his first Apology, wherein he argues for the divine original of Christianity, he lets us know, that Baptism, the Eucharist, and the first day of the week, were religiously observed among Christians; that, before Baptism, it was the practice to make open profession of one's belief of the truth of the Gospel, and solemnly to engage to live according to its laws: That, in the Eucharist, he who presided, offered up, in the name of the Son, and through the Holy Ghost, praises and thanksgivings to the Father of

* Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. 4. cap. 3. Vid. lib. 3. cap. 37.

of all, for those his blessings, therein commemorating the passion of *Jesus Christ:* And that they assembled together, on the first day of the week, in order to celebrate the memory of *Christ's* resurrection (*b*): These, among other things left us by *Justin Martyr*, are noble monuments of the practice of the primitive Christians: And still, in our day, at the distance of 1600 years, are these religious rites, after the same manner, yet understood and observed.

The third Heathen Philosopher I mention, who turned Christian, is *Athenagoras* the *Athenian*. This Philosopher had at first so very unfavourable an opinion of the Christian institution, that, in order to prevent its success in the world, he entered into a design to write against it. In the execution, however, he was not so weak, or so dishoneſt, as to fetch his objections from uncertain fame, or the common reports that went about to the disadvantage of Christians; but minding to manage his argument with greater justice, and to better purpose, he applied himself to the reading of the Scriptures, upon which the Christian faith is founded. And thus *Athenagoras*, putting himself in the way to acquire a just understanding of things, his examination proved so successful, as to lead him to perceive the truth of the Gospel; upon which he altered his opinions quite, and the keen Antagonist was changed into a zealous assertor of the Christian cause. So that, instead of writing against Christianity, as he at first intended, this Philosopher composed a fine Apology in defence of its professors, and offered it to *M. Antoninus* and his son *Commodus*, wherein he particularly complains, as *Justin Martyr* had done before him, that the name of Christian, without any other crime, was

(*b*) Just. Mart. 1 Apol. p. 93, 94, 97, 98, 99.

judged a ſufficient ground of puniſhment (*c.*) And whereas the doctrine of the reſurrection from the dead, was a ſtrong bar to the reception of the Goſpel among the learned Heathen; he likewiſe wrote an excellent little Treatiſe upon that ſubject, and therein ſhows the poſſibility, the fitneſs, and juſtice of ſuch an event.

Theſe now, beſides a great many others that might be named, are witneſſes for the hiſtory of the Goſpel, ſucceſſively contemporary with one another from the days of the Apoſtles, as far down as near the end of the ſecond century, againſt whom no poſſible exception can be taken. They believed the truth of the Goſpel;——but they did not believe till they were engaged by proper evidence:—— Upon this evidence they changed their religion, the laſt thing a ſober man will quit withal;——and the faith, to which, by this evidence, they were converted, they profeſſed in the face of mortal dangers. I do not here pretend to alledge, they had good reaſon to lay ſuch ſtreſs upon the matters of fact related in the Goſpel, as from thence to conclude the divinity of the Chriſtian religion: I only mean to ſay, That of the truth of thoſe facts they were thoroughly convinced. And when men of ſenſe and learning are found to atteſt the truth of facts, which they did not believe till after having narrowly examined them, and in atteſting of which they are extremely conſcious they expoſe themſelves to the ſevereſt treatment; if ſuch teſtimony ſhall be rejected, I know not what ſort of evidence among mankind can be depended on. In the preſent caſe, it is true, one may call it the teſtimony of friends; but one muſt likewiſe recollect, it is of friends who immediately before

(*c*) Legat. pro. Chriſtian. ſub. init.

before were enemies, and whoſe friendſhip was gained only by the bare force of naked truth, which, one ſhould think, is an evidence of all others the ſtrongeſt and moſt convincing; eſpecially, when one conſiders, that in the ſervice of this truth, however contradictory to their former ſentiments, our rational converts are now willing to ſhare the greateſt dangers. And indeed, to imagine, that ſuch men as *Quadratus*, *Juſtin*, *Athenagoras*, would ſtake all their comfort here, and all their happineſs hereafter, upon a matter of fact not thoroughly canvaſſed and examined, or upon a falſhood, either contrived by themſelves, or forged by other people, is beyond meaſure ſenſeleſs and extravagant, and would reduce the univerſal practice of mankind, in relying on moral evidence, or human teſtimony, to be the greateſt abſurdity in nature(*d*).

Let

(*d*) After the days of the Apoſtles, in the writings that came abroad in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, one ſometimes happens to meet with ſuch ſort of reaſoning, and ſuch ſort of ſentiments, as we now a days cannot but account very fanciful and very extravagant. And conſidering the plainneſs and ſimplicity of the hiſtory and doctrines of the Goſpel, it may be thought matter of wonder, how thoſe primitive Fathers, in ſome inſtances, came to argue in ſo affected and childiſh a manner, and to entertain ſuch wild and fooliſh notions. The common apology, upon ſuch occaſions, for every Father, is this, "Such was the humour of the "age." An apology not very intelligible. In my apprehenſion, the matter is briefly this:

A common branch of education among the Heathen and greatly eſteemed, was *Rhetoric*; wherein they were taught to declaim upon any ſubject, or to argue upon either ſide of any queſtion. The great art therefore was to manage an argument, not from ſolid and rational topics, but from whatever, in ſuch a caſe, could be made to bear the ſemblance of truth, or a ſhew of probability; by impoſing upon things a figurative ſenſe, or by turning them into metaphor and allegory, by forced alluſions, or by what other artifice they were capable of promoting their purpoſe, not always truth, but victory.

Another

Let me therefore hope, the Reader will have no difficulty in allowing, that the teſtimony of thoſe Heathens who turned Chriſtian, is at leaſt a ſtrong ſubſidiary proof of the hiſtory of our Saviour; and that,

Another conſiderable branch of learning among the Heathens was Philoſophy; which conſiſted, not ſo much in the handling of moral ſubjects, as in the ſtudy of the nature and cauſes of things, both heavenly and mundane. And here, among Philoſophers, as well as Poets, in what concerns the gods, and dæmons, one it entertained with ſentiments of a very odd and extraordinary nature. But to ſuch a height of extravagance did the Poets proceed in their account of the gods, from whence the notions of the bulk of mankind were derived, that Philoſophers, quite aſhamed of ſuch groſs abſurdities, did all they were able to explain them away, by repreſenting them in a figurative ſenſe, or as metaphor and allegory. By which means likewiſe the humour of allegorizing things, or making metaphors of them, greatly prevailed. And, no doubt, he muſt have been counted the acuteſt Philoſopher, who was the moſt ſubtle and expert in framing and adapting his allegories.

Now, the primitive Fathers, only converts to Chriſtianity, having had their education in the Heathen learning, one may eaſily conceive, that of courſe they muſt have brought along with them into the Chriſtian church, that turn of reaſoning to which they had been accuſtomed, and all thoſe ſentiments with which they had been prepoſſeſſed, and which, after their converſion, they apprehended were not inconſiſtent with the doctrines of the Goſpel. Thus we find Juſtin Martyr, according to the rhetoric of thoſe days, with great affectation declaiming upon the croſs of *Chriſt*, and purſuing his argument in a very odd, figurative and metaphorical manner, making this very croſs, by his far fetched compariſons, to be ſignified and repreſented by every thing. Thus alſo we find Athenagoras, another convert to Chriſtianity, educated likewiſe in the Heathen philoſophy, publiſhing, as Juſtin Martyr and others have likewiſe done, ſome very ſtrange ſentiments concerning dæmons.

The ſentiments indeed are very ſtrange, but they are none of their framing, they ſprang from their education; they were firmly believed among the Heathen, and their learned men and Philoſophers taught and maintained them. Thus Celſus repreſents the dæmons converſant about this earth, as, γενέσει συντετηκότες, *diſſolved in feats of love.* Plutarch too, when talking of Numa's intrigue

that, taking it along with the testimony of those other Heathens who still continued in their infidelity, there can be in the world no matters of fact better attested, than are those recorded in the Gospel.

SECT.

intrigue with Egeria, goes along with the Egyptians in apprehending, that a man cannot possibly have to do with a goddess, but that it is possible for gods and dæmons to mix with the daughters of men, and to beget children; Καίτοι δοκοῦσιν οὐκ ἀπιθάνως, Αἰγύπλιοι διαιρεῖν, ὡς γυναικὶ μὲν οὐκ ἀδύνατον πνεῦμα πλησίασαι θεοῦ, ᾧ τίνας ἐντεκεῖν ἀρχὰς γενέσεως, ἀνδρὶ δὲ οὐκ ἔστι σύμμιξις πρὸς θεὸν, οὐδὲ ὁμιλία σώματος. In Numa, p. 62. And of this he gives us a proof in the case of Olympias; Ὄφθη δὲ ποτὲ ᾧ δράκων, κοιμωμένης τῆς Ὀλυμπιάδος, παρεκτεταμένος τῷ σώματι. Where it is reported of Philip, ἀποβαλεῖν δὲ τῶν ὄψεων αὐτὸν τὴν ἑτέραν, ἣν τῷ τῆς θύρας ἁρμῷ προσβαλὼν, κατώπλευσεν, ἐν μορφῇ δράκοντος συνευναζόμενον τῇ γυναικὶ τὸν θεὸν. In Alexander. p. 665. And, what I take to be another very surprising instance of the same kind, we have in Pausanias, lib. 6. cap. 6. In short, I can understand nothing else from the common notion that prevailed among the Heathen, wherein not only Poets, but Philosophers and Historians apprehended, that their gods had children by such particular women; so curious were some people, or of such consequence was it thought to know, who was Æsculapius's mother, that in order to be satisfied in this question, Apollophanes consulted the oracle at Delphi. And in the response Apollo having declared, that Æsculapius was his son by the beautiful Coronis the daughter of Phlegyas:

Ὦ μέγα χάρμα βροτοῖς βλασὼν Ἀσκληπιὲ πᾶσιν·
Ὅν ποθ' Φλεγυηΐς ἔτικτεν ἐμῇ φιλότητι μεγεῖσα
Ἰμερόεσσα Κορωνὶς ἐνὶ κραναῇ Ἐπιδαύρῳ·

This Pausanias counts a demonstration, that Arsinoe was not his mother, lib. 2. cap. 26. And the story goes, that in revenge of that god's having debauched his daughter, Phlegyas set fire to Apollo's temple; for which he was severely punished: And amidst his punishment, thus he calls upon the world to learn from his example,

Discite justitiam moniti, et non temnere divos.

But

SECT. II.

Lord Bolingbroke's *Objection to the Authenticity of the Goſpel-hiſtory of no conſequence.*

THIS branch of the argument hitherto explained was publiſhed by itſelf in the year 1741. How far

But that, in the undoubted opinion of the Heathen, their gods (whom the primitive Fathers could not but regard as wicked dæmons) mixed with the daughters of men, nothing can be more convincing than the moſt piteous caſe of the chaſte Paulina, reported by Joſephus in his Antiquities, lib. 18. cap. 3. § 4. from the whole of this Lady's conduct, one clearly ſees, that the ſtory of Jupiter's aſſuming the form of Amphitryon, wherein he became the father of Hercules, (for ſays the god,) "Alcumenæ "uſuram corporis ſui, & concubitu gravidam feci filio," Plaut. and ſuch other like ſtories, muſt have been regarded by the Heathen world, not as meer poetical fictions, but as real matters of fact. And in this light, to be ſure, the Thaſians apprehended them, when they gave out, that the ghoſt of Hercules, in the form of Timoſthenes, had carnally to do with the mother of Theagenes. Θάσιοι δὲ ὑ Τιμοσθένης, παῖδα εἶναι, Θεαγένη φασὶν ἀλλὰ ἱερᾶσθαι μὲν Ἡρακλεῖ τὸν Τιμοσθένη Θασίῳ, τῦ Θεαγένυς δὲ τῇ μητρὶ Ἡρακλέυς συγγενέσθαι φάσμα ἐοικὸς Τιμοσθένει. Pauſan. lib. 6. cap. 11. And of Atia, the mother of Auguſtus, we are told, that one night, immediately after Apollo had left her, a mark, in form of a ſerpent, came out upon her body; ſo that ſhe never afterwards went to the public baths. Suet. in Auguſt. cap. 92. It was likewiſe a common opinion among the Heathen, and taught by their learned men, that dæmons were greatly delighted and feaſted, and grew fat and ſtrong, with the fumes of incenſe and the rich ſteams and blood of victims. This likewiſe is the doctrine of Celſus and Porphyry. Celſus declares himſelf thus: Χρὴ γὰρ ἴσως ὐκ ἀπιστεῖν ἀνδρασι σοφοῖς, ὅι δή φασί, διότι τῶν μὲν περιγείων δαιμόνων τὸ πλεῖσον γενέσει συντετηκος, ϗ προσηλωμένον ἅιματι, ϗ κνίσῃ, ϗ μελωδίαις,

far it might have been regarded by Lord *Bolingbroke*, had he attended to it in this light, I know not. But, in his Letters lately published on the study and use of History, his Lordship has thrown out several things that

δίαις, καὶ ἄλλοις τισι τοιούτοις προσδεδεμένον, κρεῖττον οὐδὲν δύναιτ' ἂν τῷ θεραπεῦσαι σῶμα, καὶ μέλλουσαν τύχην ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ πόλει προειπεῖν, καὶ ὅσα περὶ τὰς θνητὰς πράξεις ταῦτα ἴσασί τε καὶ δύνανται. Apud Orig. lib. 8. And says Porphyry: Βέλονται γὰρ εἶναι θεοὶ, καὶ ἡ προεσῶσα αὐτῶν δύναμις δοκεῖν θεὸς εἶναι ὁ μέγιστος. Οὗτοι οἱ χαίροντες λοιβῇτε κνίσῃτε, δι' ὧν αὐτῶν τὸ πνευματικὸν πιαίνεται· ζῇ γὰρ τοῦτο ἀτμοῖς, καὶ ἀναθυμιάσεσι, καὶ ποικίλως διὰ τῶν ποικίλων, καὶ δυναμοῦται ταῖς ἐκ τῶν αἱμάτων καὶ σαρκῶν κνίσαις. De Abstin. lib. 2.

This therefore is the plain matter of fact: The education of the primitive Fathers in the Heathen learning, led them, with the other Philosophers of those days, to entertain such particular sentiments, and to employ such a certain form of reasoning, as are now justly held absurd and ridiculous: And my design of making this remark, is to show, that the weakness of judgment, which those primitive Fathers betray in such instances, can discredit their testimony in matters of fact, as some people may alledge it does, no more than it can discredit the testimony of the best Heathen Philosophers. Indeed such people's attestation of matters of fact, that favour, or that have a near connection with such absurd sentiments, may very justly be suspected. But where their mind is not biassed by such sentiments, and they are otherwise free and irreproachable, I see nothing that can invalidate their testimony. And truly, if weakness of judgment, in some particular matters of opinion or speculation, were sufficient to disgrace an evidence in all matters of fact whatsoever, I am afraid that few of mankind, especially of the learned world, would be found deserving of credit. In all such cases it seems only requisite, carefully to advert to the tendency of a man's absurd opinions, and to beware of readily believing those matters of fact, which from his known prejudices, may appear to him certain and undoubted.

But I will farther willingly confess, that the primitive Fathers, after they had renounced Heathenism, and espoused Christianity, came to conceive so warm and strong a passion for the Christian revelation; and esteeming it the will of God that it should be established in the world, were animated with such fervent zeal for

that would make the authenticity of the Gospel-history still a problem, very far from being yet solved. I confess it appears to me, that this noble Writer has said nothing of that moment that deserves to be answered.

for its support and propagation, that they gladly embraced every opportunity whereby to promote its interest; and laid hold of every argument that could recommend it to the superior esteem of mankind. And had this heat and fervour been attended with a steady composure of mind, and an open freedom of judgment, that engaged and enabled them to examine things thoroughly, before they happened to propose them in defence and recommendation of Christianity, nothing surely could have been more commendable. But their warm hasty zeal (which, in the nature of things, could not but grow warmer from opposition) made them rash and forward, impatient of inquiry; so that very inconsiderately they catched at every incident that seemed promising, and amused themselves, and the world about them, with imaginary events, which, instead of advancing the credit of the Gospel, could not but, contrary to their intention, rather impair its reputation. Thus, for example, the arguments which, in the fervour of his zeal, Justin Martyr rashly draws against the Heathen, and in defence of the Gospel, from the statue of Simon Magus, from the Sibylline Oracles, from the story of the Septuagint Version, are false and groundless, and are far from doing service to the Christian cause. And such instances of rashness, and want of consideration, occasioned by a forward over-heated zeal, added to what I observed before, ought to make us cautious in the use of the primitive Fathers, and prevent our resigning ourselves implicitly to their judgment in matters of doctrine, or to their testimony in matters of fact. In both which, they have unhappily led the way to many erroneous opinions, and superstitious practices, that have greatly deformed the Christian institution, and involved the world in many endless contentious disputes. And such remarks, I hope, can offend only those who think with If Barthelemi, that, amidst so many heresies now in the world, it is necessary that a profound regard should be maintained in the church for the holy Fathers: For that their authority once despised and lost, there is no way left whereby to confound heretics, and to engage people to acknowledge the holy See. Hist. du Jansenis. tom. 3. p. 309.

But whatever, after their conversion, was the credulity of the primitive Fathers, with respect to such events or occurrences, as seemed to flatter or to conspire with their passionate zeal for the defence

anſwered. But as ſuch a character, ſome people may think, ought not to be neglected, I ſhall employ a few pages in conſidering what his Lordſhip is pleaſed to advance upon this article.

We muſt therefore conceive, that Lord *Bolingbroke* is animated with a mighty zeal for the truth of Chriſtianity: And thus inſpired, altho' the world is full of books written on purpoſe to juſtify the Chriſtian cauſe, which books have not yet, and never will be anſwered, his Lordſhip, I ſay, quite overpowered by his Chriſtian zeal, loudly complains of Chriſtian Divines, that hitherto they have done nothing to purpoſe, and therefore calls upon the Clergy in all Chriſtian communions, telling them, "It is high time they ſhould join their forces, and "eſtabliſh thoſe hiſtorical facts, which are the foun-"dations of the whole ſyſtem, on clear and un-"queſtionable authority, ſuch as they require in all "caſes of moment from others (*e*)." Pleaſant enough! With what has his Lordſhip been converſant in the world? Why, "it has been long matter of aſtoniſh-"ment to this noble Author, how Chriſtian Divines "could take ſo much ſilly pains to eſtabliſh myſtery

defence and propagation of the Goſpel; no man can imagine, that by any degree of credulity they came over to the Chriſtian profeſſion. On the contrary, in oppoſition to their making of this change (where they were not engaged by a ſincere and impartial ſearch after truth, which upon leading a man to embrace Chriſtianity, was no leſs dangerous) there ſtood, not only the whole force of ſtrong prejudices and ſtubborn habits, from their having been early educated, and long accuſtomed to the Heathen learning and religion, but all the unavoidable dangers to which the profeſſors of Chriſtianity were then continually expoſed. We are therefore well aſſured; it muſt have been the moſt overbearing evidence, on the ſide of thoſe matters of fact, upon which the truth of Chriſtianity is grounded, that determined them to declare themſelves Chriſtians.

(*e*) Letters of the ſtudy, &c. p. 183. vol. 1.

" on metaphyſics, revelation on philoſophy, and " matters of fact on abſtract reaſoning (*f.*)" And indeed, to go about to eſtabliſh myſtery on metaphyſics is abundantly idle; but to ſhow that revelation is conſiſtent with philoſophy, with the pureſt informations of reaſon, does not ſeem to be altogether ſo idle; nor can I think it poſſible to eſtabliſh any one matter of fact, without the aſſiſtance of abſtract reaſoning, I mean without explaining that fact by the principles of moral evidence. No doubt, it is monſtrouſly abſurd, in the room of teſtimony or witneſſes, to ſubſtitute abſtract reaſoning. But this is an abſurdity peculiar to our Infidels, who by abſtract reaſoning would prove, that God never revealed himſelf to mankind, and, in ſeveral inſtances, who to plain matter of fact oppoſe nothing but empty ſpeculation. I would fain hope that this noble Author knows of no Chriſtian Writer, on whom this abſurdity, in proving the truth of Chriſtianity, can be fixed. On the contrary, I incline to think, that his Lordſhip's obſervation, not very acceptable to Lord *Shafteſbury*, is what every Chriſtian will ſubſcribe to; " A religi- " on founded on the authority of a divine miſſion, " confirmed by propheſies and miracles, appeals to " facts; and the facts muſt be proved as all other " facts that paſs for authentic are proved; for faith, " ſo reaſonable after this proof, is abſurd before " it (*g.*)"

It is true, " No ſcholar will dare to deny, that " falſe hiſtory, as well as ſham miracles, has been " employed to propagate Chriſtianity formerly: " and whoever examines the Writers of our own age " will find the ſame abuſe of hiſtory continued (*h.*)" This likewiſe is an obſervation of Lord *Bolingbroke:*

And

(*f*) Ibid. p. 175. (*g*) Ibid. p. 174. (*h*) Ibid. p. 176.

And it is charitable to believe, that the obſervation is made, not with a deſign to prejudice the world againſt the truth of the Goſpel, but to put people upon their guard, and to engage them to be cautious and circumſpect in admitting any particular hiſtory or miracles in proof of the Chriſtian revelation. A moſt neceſſary warning; and as there is no argument that has not had the misfortune to fall into bad hands, a warning in all caſes to be liſtened to. No ſcholar will dare to deny, that falſe reaſoning and inconcluſive arguments have been employed to propagate the belief of a God, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. But as this obſervation by no means inſinuates, there is no juſt reaſoning, no concluſive arguments, whereby one may demonſtrate the truth of theſe fundamental articles of natural religion; ſo as little can Lord *Bolingbroke*'s obſervation inſinuate, there is no authentic hiſtory, no real miracles, from whence one may demonſtrate the truth of the Chriſtian inſtitution. Some indeed, in matters of hiſtory, would eſtabliſh univerſal Pyrrhoniſm; but his Lordſhip laughs at thoſe people, and leaves the Sceptics, in modern as well as antient hiſtory, to triumph "in the notable diſcovery of the Ides of "one month miſtaken for the Kalends of another, "or in the various dates, and contradictory circum-"ſtances which they find in weekly Gazettes and "monthly Mercuries (*i*)." His opinion is, that "the body of hiſtory which we poſſeſs, ſince "antient memorials have been ſo critically examined, "and modern memorials have been ſo multiplied, "contains in it ſuch a probable ſeries of events, "eaſily diſtinguiſhable from the improbable, as "force the aſſent of every man who is in his "ſenſes."

(*i*) Ibid. p. 169.

" ſenſes (*k*)." This is his Lordſhip's opinion; and in this opinion, as I ſee no ſhadow of reaſon why he ſhould not, I hope he comprehends both ſacred and profane hiſtory. But the truth is,

This noble Writer, without offering to gratify his Chriſtian zeal in performing the charitable taſk for them, affects to be highly diſpleaſed with all Chriſtian Divines, for their not having as yet made out the authenticity of the Goſpel-hiſtory. He loudly complains, that " whilſt hiſtory alone can furniſh " the proper proofs, that the religion they teach is " of God, the unfair manner in which theſe proofs " have been and are daily furniſhed, creates preju- " dices, and gives advantages againſt Chriſtianity " that require to be removed.——Many and many " inſtances of this abuſe of hiſtory might be pro- " duced. It is grown into cuſtom, Writers copy " one another, and the miſtake that was committed, " or the falſhood that was invented by one, is a- " dopted by hundreds (*l*)." This, in his zeal for Chriſtianity, is his Lordſhip's complaint. And no doubt any man converſant in thoſe matters, has it in his power to produce many inſtances of the abuſe of hiſtory, among ſome that are called Chriſtian Divines; which inſtances, however, with no reaſonable man, can in any meaſure prove injurious to the truth of the Goſpel. But I eſteem his Lordſhip for his not trifling in the matter, but producing an inſtance, which ſome people may think of conſequence; and, if true, to extenuate the authority of the Goſpel-hiſtory. His Lordſhip obſerves, that " in eſtabliſhing the " truth of this hiſtory, Chriſtian Divines appeal to " the teſtimony of the Fathers of the firſt century, " and alledge that theſe Fathers have, in their wri- " tings, tranſcribed ſeveral paſſages out of our Evan- " geliſts:

(*k*) Ibid. p. 137. (*l*) Ibid. p. 176.

" gelists:" But, what is thus alledged, our noble Author pretends, " is a mistake or a falshood." Here then is a single instance of the abuse of history, which Lord *Bolingbroke* apprends may well suffice to " discredit the truth of the history of the Gospel (*m*). And how far his Lordship is in the right, as to this particular instance, or supposing him right, how far it would affect the Gospel-history, I propose here to consider.

Let it then be observed, not only in all the several articles that concern faith and practice, but in the other articles of less importance, the Fathers of the first century, do so exactly agree with the Authors of the New Testament, that one is led directly to apprehend, that these Fathers have certainly taken their account and notions of things from those Authors: For one cannot well suppose, that the Authors of the New Testament had their information from these Fathers. This lies obvious to every Man who compares their writings together. In particular, the Fathers of the first century tell us, that, for the propagation of the Gospel, our Saviour employed so many persons called Apostles. " *Jesus Christ*, says " *Clemens Romanus*, was sent of God. The Apostles " were sent by *Jesus Christ*. Those Apostles went " forth, and preached the Gospel to the world, and " in towns and villages appointed other fit persons " to carry on the same service (*n*). " In this view it is, that *Ignatius*, in his Epistle to the *Magnesians*, exhorts those people to continue stedfast in the doctrines of our Lord and his Apostles (*o*): Elsewhere declaring, that, as for himself, " the Gospel, and the A- " postles were his refuge (*p*);" meaning, most certainly, not the Apostles themselves then dead, but their

(*m*) Ibid. p. 177, 178.
(*n*) Clem. 1st Epist. § 42.
(*o*) Ign. ad Mag. § 13.
(*p*) Id. ad Philadelph. § 5.

their writings. And says, *Polycarp*, " Let us so " serve him with fear and reverence, as he himself hath " commanded us, and the Apostles who preached " the Gospel to us, and the Prophets who foretold " the coming of our Lord (*q*)." I confess, neither *Barnabas*, *Clemens*, *Ignatius*, *Polycarp*, nor *Papias*, do any where give us the names of all the Apostles: Nor is there any thing in their writings that would make such a catalogue necessary. However, as occasion seems to require, they mention some of them; and after the same manner take notice of their writings. *Barnabas* indeed mentions no name, but he tells us, that " *Christ* elected his Apostles, that " he gave them power to preach the gospel; and " that their number was twelve (*r*)." Of those Apostles *Clemens* names *Paul*, *Cephas*, and *Apollo*; and informs us, that *Paul* wrote an Epistle to the *Corinthians* (*f*). *Paul* is likewise mentioned by *Ignatius*, who insinuates that this Apostle wrote an Epistle to the *Ephesians* (*t*). *Polycarp* too speaks of *Paul* as an Apostle, and observes his writing an Epistle to the *Philippians*. " Neither I, says *Polycarp*, " nor any one like me, can attain to the wisdom of " the blessed and illustrious *Paul*, who, when among " you, taught the word of truth fully and steadily, " and when absent wrote you an Epistle, whereby " you may be built up in the faith. I beseech you, " therefore, follow the patience which you have " observed in *Paul* himself, and in the rest of " the Apostles (*u*)." But we have a greater number named by *Papias*, who was St. *John*'s disciple and *Polycarp*'s companion: This Father, among the Disciples

(*q*) Polycarp. ad Philip. § 6.
(*f*) Clem. 1st Epist. § 47.
(*u*) Polycarp. Epist. § 3. 9.
(*r*) Barnab. Epist. § 5. 8.
(*t*) Ign. ad Ephes. § 12.

Diſciples or Apoſtles of our Lord, mentions *Andrew*, *Peter*, *Philip*, *Thomas*, *James*, *John*, and *Matthew*. He gives us to underſtand, that both *Matthew* and *Mark* committed the Goſpel to writing. And he quotes paſſages from the Acts of the Apoſtles, the firſt Epiſtle of *John*, and the firſt of *Peter* (*x*).

Irenæus, indeed, never ſaw any of the Apoſtles, and cannot therefore be counted of the firſt century; but I may here add him, as he was a diſciple of *Polycarp*'s, and retained the deepeſt impreſſions of what that antient Father taught the world, concerning the miracles and doctrines of our Saviour, as he had learned them from the Apoſtle *John*, and from many others, with whom he was intimately acquainted, who had ſeen our Lord, the Word of life (*y*). And, in the caſe of *Irenæus*, one may obſerve, with what caution and integrity theſe Fathers acted, in matters relating to the Chriſtian inſtitution, and how concerned they were to prevent all impoſition and forgery. At the end of one of his books, in defence of the doctrines of the Goſpel, he ſubjoins this awful charge: "Thou who ſhalt tranſcribe this book, I adjure "thee, by our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, and by his ap- "pearance to judge the quick and the dead, that "thou compare what thou ſhalt have tranſcribed, "and carefully correct it by this copy from whence "thou haſt tranſcribed it. And this adjuration thou "ſhalt in like manner write out, and inſert in your "copy (*z*)." Now this ſame *Irenæus* informs us, that

(*x*) *Euſebius* is of opinion, that when *Papias* tells us, he had learned the Goſpel from the Antients, he only means thoſe who had converſed with the Apoſtles. But that, by Antients, *Papias* means the Apoſtles themſelves, is plain from his immediately ſpeaking of *Andrew*, *Peter*, &c. under that deſignation. *Vid. Euſeb. Ec. Hiſt. lib.* 3. *c.* 39.

(*y*) *Id. ibid. lib.* 5. *cap.* 20. (*z*) *Id. ibid.*

that *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*, did each of them write the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*: And from these Gospels, by name, he transcribes a great many passages (*a*). He is very frequent too in his citations from the other books of the New Testament. And, no doubt, these are the writings, particularly the four Gospels, which *Irenæus* has in his eye, when he assures us, "that, whatever *Polycarp* taught from "the information of those who had seen our Lord, "was altogether consonant to the Scriptures (*b*)." Nay, from *Irenæus* we likewise learn, that, in order to gain credit to their false doctrines, the Heretics of the first century (contemporary with the Apostles,) or with those who saw the Apostles, appealed to the Scriptures, particularly the four Gospels, which they misunderstood and perverted to their own purposes (*c*): *Heracleon*, in particular, wrote Commentaries upon the Gospel of St. *John*, which *Origen* takes frequent notice of.

Thus we see, who were the Apostles or Disciples of our Lord, that were first employed to preach the Gospel to the world, and whose doctrines and instructions were regarded by the Fathers of the first century, as true and authentic, of divine authority, or as coming from *Jesus Christ*.

We

(*a*) Irenæ. cont. Hæres. lib. 3. cap. 1. 9, 10, 11. et pass.

(*b*) Euseb ub. supra.

(*c*) Τοιαῦτα μὲν ὧν περὶ Πληρώματος αὐτῶν, καὶ τῦ πλάσματος πάντες λέγουσιν, ἐφορμίζειν βιαζόμενοι τὰ καλῶς εἰρημένα, τοῖς κακῶς ἐπινενοημένοις ὑπ' αὐτῶν. καὶ ἀ μόνον ἐκ τῶν Εὐαγγελικῶν, καὶ τῶν Ἀποστολικῶν πειρῶντας, τὰς ἀποδείξεις ποιεῖσθαι, παρατρέποντες τὰς ἑρμηνείας, καὶ ῥαδιυργοῦντες τὰς ἐξηγήσεις· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ Νόμυ, καὶ Προφητῶν. Irenæ. cont. Hæres. lib. 1. cap. 3. § 6. Vid. cap. 8. et alib. Tanta est autem circa Evangelia hæc firmitas, ut et ipsi Hæretici testimonium reddant eis, et ex ipsis egrediens unusquisque eorum conetur suam confirmare doctrinam. Id. ibid. lib. 3. cap. 11. § 7. Vid. cap. 14. § 3. 4.

We find likewiſe, that ſo many of thoſe Apoſtles or Diſciples of our Lord, namely *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, *John*, *Peter*, *Paul*, left their inſtructions in writing: And that thoſe writings are the original and authentic records, wherein the Son of God hath brought life and immortality to light, and taught mankind the way that leads to that happineſs.

It is therefore from the living inſtructions of the Apoſtles, and thoſe inſtructions committed to writing, that the Fathers of the firſt century, the contemporaries and immediate ſucceſſors of the Apoſtles, derived the account they give us concerning *Jeſus Chriſt*, and the doctrines of his Goſpel. And thus it is, that in the writings of theſe Fathers, there is nothing diſcordant or contradictory to thoſe of the New Teſtament; but, in the hiſtory of the birth, life, death, reſurrection and aſcenſion of *Jeſus*, and in all articles of faith and practice, an intire harmony and agreement.

When, therefore, in the writings of theſe Fathers, one happens to meet with any particulars repreſented to be ſaid or done by our Saviour, what elſe can one preſume to think, but that their knowledge of thoſe particulars came either from the mouths or the writings of the Apoſtles? And if, in the writings of the Apoſtles, thoſe particulars occur to us, expreſſed in the ſame, or much after the ſame manner they are expreſſed in the writings of *Clemens*, *Polycarp*, *&c.* although theſe Fathers do not expreſsly mention the particular book or Author from whence they had thoſe paſſages, may not one reaſonably reſt ſatisfied, that they certainly tranſcribed them from the writings of that particular Apoſtle who relates them? How, in a conſiſtency with hiſtory, and a prudent unbiaſſed judgment of things, one can do otherwiſe, is, I confeſs, beyond my comprehenſion.

Indeed, every body knows from St. *Luke*, that, in the days of the Apoſtles, many had gone about to write the hiſtory of the Goſpel: And one may eaſily apprehend that thoſe hiſtories came into the hands of the Fathers of the firſt century. But what thoſe hiſtories are, or by whom compiled, and in thoſe days how far they were regarded, none of thoſe Fathers take ſo much notice of them, as to inform us. Here it is, however, that Chriſtian Divines come to be thus queſtioned and reprehended by Lord *Bolingbroke*: "If, ſays "his Lordſhip, the Fathers of the firſt century do "mention ſome paſſages that are agreeable to what "we read in our Evangeliſts, will it follow, that "theſe Fathers had the ſame Goſpels before them? "To ſay ſo, is a manifeſt abuſe of hiſtory, and quite "inexcuſable in Writers that knew, or ſhould have "known, that theſe Fathers made uſe of other Go-"ſpels, wherein ſuch paſſages might be contained, "or they might be preſerved in unwritten tradi-"tion (*d*)." In unwritten tradition! not, I hope, when thoſe Fathers tell us, thoſe paſſages are written. Nor is the importance of his Lordſhip's *might-be's* ſo eaſy to be underſtood, whilſt this common maxim prevails in the world, "That which may "be an evaſion in any caſe, can be admitted in "none."

But, by ſuch reflections, what is the good uſe which this noble Writer is here making of hiſtory? He does not alledge, that thoſe paſſages mentioned, or quoted by the Fathers of the firſt century, and which we meet with in our Evangeliſts, are forged and not authentic. On the contrary, as if he meant to ſhow the folly of his deſign, or how groundleſs his complaint is, he ſeems to eſtabliſh their authenticity, in telling us, that thoſe paſſages might be contained

(*d*) P. 178.

tained in the other Goſpels, which, at that time, were in the hands of theſe Fathers; or, they might be preſerved in unwritten tradition, and by that means come to their knowledge. As thoſe paſſages, therefore, are confeſſedly not forged, but authentic hiſtory, I am at a loſs, I ſay, to underſtand what it is that his Lordſhip means here particularly to condemn. "They are agreeable to what we read, *i. e.* "they are contained in our Evangeliſts; but they "might be contained in other Goſpels, or they might "be preſerved in unwritten tradition; and there-"fore, to ſay that the Fathers of the firſt century "had them from our Evangeliſts, or had the ſame "Goſpels before them, is a manifeſt abuſe of hiſtory." That this is any abuſe of hiſtory, I am far from being ſenſible. But I am well perſuaded, that his Lordſhip's argument is a manifeſt abuſe of logic, and quite inexcuſable in a Writer that pretends to reaſoning. But, leaving ſuch ſophiſtry to the judgment of the Reader, I ſhall obſerve, that no lover of truth can go along with his Lordſhip in affirming, "It "is a manifeſt abuſe of hiſtory, and quite inexcuſe-"able, to pretend, that the Fathers of the firſt "century had our Evangeliſts before them, whilſt "it is well known that theſe Fathers made uſe "of other Goſpels, wherein thoſe paſſages they "mention might be contained;" till it ſhall be clearly proved,

That, in the firſt century, not the Goſpels of our Evangeliſts, but ſome other Goſpels were exiſting, and made uſe of by the Fathers of that century.—That thoſe other Goſpels did actually contain thoſe paſſages mentioned by theſe Fathers in their writings:—And that though it ſhould appear, that the Goſpels of our Evangeliſts were at that time exiſting, yet theſe Fathers did, preferably to our Evangeliſts,

geliſts, tranſcribe thoſe paſſages from thoſe other Goſpels. I ſay, before a lover of truth can agree to his Lordſhip's concluſion, he muſt be ſatisfied as to theſe particulars.

Indeed, our noble Author ſeems to think very contemptibly of that man, who ſhould be found ſo far ignorant as not to know, that the Fathers of the firſt century made uſe of other Goſpels. And, no doubt, his Lordſhip is fully ſatisfied upon good and clear evidence, that ſuch Goſpels were then certainly exiſting, and actually in the hands of theſe Fathers. What thoſe particular Goſpels are, which this noble Writer might here have had in his eye, I will not take upon me to divine (*e*). Poſſibly, had he been pleaſed

(*e*) Of the other Goſpels, the moſt conſiderable mentioned by the primitive Fathers, are the Goſpel of the *Hebrews*, or of the *Nazarenes*, and the Goſpel of the *Egyptians*. It is thought that thoſe Goſpels taught no heretical doctrines; and, no doubt, they contained a good deal of genuine hiſtory. But, in my apprehenſion, they could of themſelves be of no great authority. When they firſt appeared in the world cannot be determined; nor do we find them any where expreſsly mentioned till towards the end of the ſecond century, when *Clemens Alexandrinus* quotes ſome paſſages from them. Of thoſe Goſpels nothing now remains but ſome fragments. The moſt antient ſeems to be that of the *Hebrews*. And, from the fragments of this Goſpel, one may eaſily diſcern, that the author has not attended to the real truth of things, but given credit to falſe reports, or indulged his own imagination in forging ſome particular events. What I have in my eye is this, in this Goſpel according to the *Hebrews* we are told, "that *James* had ſwore, that, from the time of his drinking of the cup of the Lord, he would not eat bread, till he "ſhould ſee him raiſed again from the dead: And that, after the "reſurrection, Chriſt appeared to him, and ſaid, My brother, "eat your bread, for the Son of Man is riſen from the dead." Now, this paſſage, as it repreſents *James* amidſt ſome paſſionate hopes, at leaſt concerning the reſurrection, appears to me altogether inconſiſtent with the notions, and ſentiments, and expectations, that prevailed, and which at that time could not but prevail,

pleaſed to mention them, one might have examined whether they appeared ſo early. But whatever they were, one may beg to be informed, what is that clear evidence, upon which his Lordſhip is ſo very poſitive as to this particular? From the Fathers of the firſt century we can learn nothing concerning thoſe other Goſpels. I would preſume to aſk, Can his Lordſhip produce any other evidence than that which ariſes from St. *Luke*'s information? Whatever it be, in my apprehenſion, it is impoſſible to prove, by any evidence, that other Goſpels were exiſting in the firſt century, and made uſe of by the Fathers of that century; where the ſelf-ſame evidence (not to ſpeak of ſtronger) does not equally prove the ſelf-ſame thing concerning the Goſpels of our Evangeliſts. So certain and undoubted is this, that one may ſafely challenge the moſt knowing Infidel to ſhow it otherwiſe. And in ſuch circumſtances, one may venture to affirm, that to be poſitive as to the exiſtence of other Goſpels, and to call in queſtion thoſe of the New Teſtament, is a partiality that does not become our noble Author, and may be counted a manifeſt abuſe of hiſtory, which requires every thing to be put in its own proper place, as the importance of the thing, and the evidence upon which it ſtands, ſhall determine it. Nor, without this wiſe and judicious conduct, this uprightneſs and impartiality, can the great end of hiſtory well be attained, "the "making

vail, in the minds of the Diſciples and Apoſtles, who neither apprehended the crucifixion, nor expected the reſurrection, an event with them ſo incredible, that they regarded the firſt accounts of it as idle tales. Whoever, therefore, was the author of this Goſpel of the *Nazarenes*, he was none of the immediate followers and Diſciples of our Lord, he is unacquainted with the real ſituation of people's minds during the life and paſſion of our Saviour; and framing events according to his own fancy, is in the caſe of *James the Juſt*, guilty of a manifeſt miſrepreſentation and falſity.

" making us better men and better citizens." And what hiſtory more conducive, more effectual to this noble purpoſe, than " the hiſtory of the life of *Je-* " *ſus!*" Thus, therefore, Lord *Bolingbroke* can be confident of the exiſtence of other Goſpels in the firſt century, upon no other evidence than that which equally proves, that the Goſpels of our Evangeliſts were then likewiſe exiſting. And as to the next particular;

Without any ſcruple, I go along with his Lordſhip in believing, that the paſſages here underſtood to be mentioned by the Fathers of the firſt century, might be contained in the other Goſpels then publiſhed, or they might, at that time, be preſerved in unwritten tradition: Nay, as our Evangeliſts do not pretend to have recorded all the ſayings and actions of *Jeſus*, I doubt not but other authentic paſſages concerning our Saviour, not mentioned in our Goſpels, or in the Fathers of the firſt century, might likewiſe be contained in thoſe other Goſpels, or preſerved in unwritten tradition. Thus far I am prone to believe. So that here,

With reſpect to the *third* particular; There are three different ſources, from whence theſe Fathers might have derived thoſe paſſages tranſcribed in their writings, namely, the books of the New Teſtament; —ſome other Goſpels;—and unwritten tradition: Of which Goſpels, and unwritten tradition, we of this age are altogether ignorant. Now, the queſtion is not, Which of theſe three ſhall be counted to contain the moſt authentic hiſtory concerning our Saviour? As to this we do not here differ; they are ſuppoſed all equal and upon a level; for his Lordſhip affirms, that " thoſe paſſages, that are agreeable to " what we read in our Evangeliſts, might be con- " tained in thoſe other Goſpels, or in unwritten tra- " dition."

" dition."——The queſtion is, From which of the three have theſe Fathers taken thoſe paſſages? And, in my apprehenſion, as all the three are underſtood to be quite conſiſtent, perfectly to agree together, and to carry with them an equal degree of authority, the queſtion is wholly idle and to no purpoſe. Nor, in ſuch circumſtances, where all of them ſeem to be intitled to equal regard, can one approve of our noble Author's partiality, in preferring thoſe other Goſpels and unwritten tradition, before the books of the New Teſtament. At the ſame time, as no man has it now in his power to ſhow the world thoſe other Goſpels, and to ſettle that unwritten tradition, it follows of courſe, from his Lordſhip's reaſoning, that the only authentic hiſtory now remaining, concerning the bleſſed *Jeſus*, is contained in the writings of our Evangeliſts and Apoſtles. Thus much might ſuffice. But as in defence of Chriſtianity, one is frequently obliged to explain and inculcate the plaineſt truths, I ſhall a little conſider this queſtion according to the truth of hiſtory; and, in that view of things, give it an anſwer.

As the Fathers of the firſt century give not the moſt diſtant hint, make not the leaſt mention of thoſe other teachers or Goſpels, from whence Lord *Bolingbroke* alledges they might tranſcribe ſome paſſages; ſo, as I have before obſerved, they always regarded the Apoſtles as the only perſons immediately commiſſioned by *Jeſus Chriſt* to preach the Goſpel to mankind; they themſelves had conſtant recourſe to them; and they earneſtly recommended it to all Chriſtians ſteadily to adhere to their doctrines. Of neceſſity therefore it muſt be allowed, that what information or inſtruction theſe Fathers received from the mouths or the writings of the Apoſtles, thoſe they could not but eſteem inconteſtably true and authentic,

authentic, of such undoubted sovereign authority, that thereby the credit of all other teachers and Gospels must have been judged and determined *(e)*. Unless, therefore, it can be supposed, in contradiction to the truth of history, that these Fathers equalled or preferred the authority of some other persons, to that of the Apostles of our Lord, it is certain, beyond question, that those passages mentioned by these Fathers, that are agreeable to what we read in our Evangelists, though they might be contained in other Gospels, are taken out of these same Evangelists. Not but that in some instances they might fetch passages from some other Gospels immediately. (Which does not seem to have happened any where *(f)*, but in the second Epistle of *Clemens*, whose authenticity

(e) Non enim per alios dispositionem salutis nostræ cognovimus, quam per eos, per quos Evangelium pervenit ad nos: quod quidem tunc præconaverunt; postea vero per Dei voluntatem in Scripturis nobis tradiderunt, fundamentum et columnam fidei nostræ futurum. Irenæ. cont. Hæres. lib. 3. cap. 1.

(f) In his Epistle to the Smyrneans, Ignatius reports, that when Jesus came to Peter, and those with him, he said unto them, "Handle me and see that I am no incorporeal dæmon." This passage, St. Jerome tells us, Ignatius transcribed from the Gospel of the Hebrews. But as Eusebius, who had perused that Gospel, says expressly, that he knows not from whence Ignatius had it, (Eccles. Hist. lib. 3. cap. 36.) one may suspect that the copies of that Gospel were very different. And indeed it is thought to have had many additions made to it, whereof, perhaps, this may be counted one taken from Ignatius. For my part, when I consider that the antients, in their quotations, did frequently express the sense, without copying the precise words, I incline to think that this passage mentioned by Ignatius is taken from St. Luke xxiv. 39. For Ignatius having immediately before insinuated, that those Heretics who maintained, that "Christ "suffered only in appearance," might as well be said to "exist "only in appearance;" and that what they alledged concerning Christ, might as well be said to have happened to themselves, *viz.* "they

authenticity is ſuſpected.) But, as therein they moſt undoubtedly had in their view the Goſpels of our Evangeliſts, as the meaſure and ſtandard of truth in the hiſtory of our Saviour, to which nothing contrary could be admitted; it may be ſaid, in a large ſenſe, that even ſuch paſſages were copied from our Evangeliſts; at leaſt, they copied them not without an eye to their approbation. So that, as the Fathers of the firſt century did always regard the inſtructions and writings of the Apoſtles to be of divine authority, one may ſafely ſay, that, from their mentioning ſome paſſages, that are agreeable to what we read in our Evangeliſts, it clearly follows, that theſe Fathers had the ſame Goſpels before them. To ſay otherwiſe, is a manifeſt abuſe of hiſtory, and quite inexcuſable in Writers that knew, or ſhould have known, that the Fathers of the firſt century did univerſally and firmly believe, that God ſent *Chriſt*, and *Chriſt* ſent his Apoſtles to publiſh his Goſpel, and to inſtruct mankind in matters of religion.

But Lord *Bolingbroke* could almoſt venture to affirm, that theſe Fathers of the firſt century do not expreſsly name the Goſpels we have of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John* (*g*). And his Lordſhip would have obliged the world, had he condeſcended to explain what he means by this obſervation. Does he mean, that the Goſpels we now have did not appear during the firſt century, but are the production of the next, or of

they are incorporeal and demoniac, ἀσωμάτοι καὶ δαιμονιακοὶ, *meer apparitions*; he proceeds in the ſame language, and inſtead of the Evangeliſt's words, ψηλαφήσατέ με, καὶ ἴδετε, ὅτι πνεῦμα σάρκα καὶ ὀστέα οὐκ ἔχει, in order to render the truth, in the preſent caſe, more ſtriking, he very naturally expreſſes himſelf thus, ψηλαφήσατέ με, καὶ ἴδετε, ὅτι οὐκ εἰμὶ δαιμόνιον ἀσώματον.

(*g*) Ub. ſup. p. 178.

ſome later age? In this caſe, indeed, the Fathers of the firſt century could not have our Goſpels before them. But that theſe Goſpels were then extant, all antiquity declares: And his Lordſhip's almoſt venturing to affirm the contrary, can be regarded by no man. Or does he mean, that the Fathers of the firſt century do not particularly diſtinguiſh the Goſpels we now have by the names of thoſe Evangeliſts to whom they are ſeverally aſcribed? Herein, I confeſs, his obſervation is juſt, with reſpect to *Barnabas*, *Clemens*, *Ignatius*, and *Polycarp*; but *Papias* expreſsly names the Goſpels of *Matthew* and *Mark*. But, becauſe ſo many of theſe Fathers do not mention the Goſpels under the names of the particular Evangeliſts who wrote them, would this noble Writer have it to follow, that our Evangeliſts are not the Authors of theſe Goſpels? This again is wholly repugnant to the expreſs evidence of all antiquity. I have inſtanced in *Papias* and *Irenæus*, in the Heretics of the firſt century, the teſtimony is uniform and conſtant, without interruption, to the preſent time.

Nor, in my opinion, would it greatly forward his Lordſhip's deſign, ſhould it be granted, that *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, *John*, are not the Authors of theſe Goſpels that go under their name. Indeed, our knowing, and our not knowing the name, the character and circumſtances of an Author, have, each of them, their advantages and diſadvantages: As in the preſent caſe, and in other inſtances, I am afraid, the name of Lord *Bolingbroke* may have a bad influence over ſome people, and blind or harden their minds againſt reaſon and truth. But, by whatever name an Hiſtorian may be deſigned, call him *Livy*, or *Tacitus*, or what you will; or let him be diſtinguiſhed by no name; it is, moſt certainly, from his writings

that

that we ſettle his character, or ſatisfy ourſelves as to his knowledge, his ſenſe and judgment, his truth and veracity. Whoever, therefore, were the Authors of the Goſpels aſcribed to our Evangeliſts, their writings declare them knowing, ſenſible, judicious Hiſtorians, in every article diſpaſſionate, unbiaſſed, and faithful. Each of them is every-where conſiſtent with himſelf: They are all conſiſtent with one another: And they agree with the other Hiſtorians of thoſe days, as to the circumſtances of the world at that time, in what relates either to civil or ſacred matters. In particular, they relate the great articles of the Goſpel, the birth, the life, the miracles and doctrines, the paſſion, the reſurrection, and aſcenſion of *Jeſus*, the foundations of the whole ſyſtem, much more fully indeed, but after the ſame manner, wherein they are related in the Epiſtles of St. *Paul*, which, Lord *Bolingbroke* could not but know, were early publiſhed, and in the writings of the Fathers of the firſt century. So that although one ſhould be able to prove, that the Goſpels, however worthy of our Evangeliſts, muſt have been compoſed by ſome other perſons; yet this will very little help the cauſe of infidelity, unleſs one ſhall proceed further, and make it appear, that, whoever were the Authors of theſe Goſpels, they are forged and fabulous.

That which has afforded a handle to Lord *Bolingbroke*, thus to miſrepreſent the Goſpels of our Evangeliſts, ſeems to be the Fathers of the firſt century their never expreſsly naming thoſe particular Evangeliſts, from whoſe Goſpels they have inſerted in their writings ſeveral paſſages. And indeed this, to us, who follow another cuſtom in our quotations, may ſeem ſomewhat ſurpriſing: But, if we attend to the method obſerved by the antients, it will appear not quite ſo ſtrange. In the writings of the New Teſtament,

Teſtament, there are many paſſages from the Old; but very frequently the particular Authors or books from whence thoſe paſſages are taken, are not named. After the ſame manner, in the writings of the Fathers of the firſt century, the Paſſages from the Old Teſtament are very numerous, yet very rarely do theſe Fathers expreſsly name the Authors from whom they tranſcribe them. Their common method is, to introduce their citations by ſome ſuch general expreſſions, "It is written;" "The Scripture de-"clares, *&c.*" And as ſometimes they inſert paſſages without any reference, ſo they frequently mix or join together, not only ſeveral diſtant paſſages of the ſame Author, but ſeveral paſſages of different Authors, without any diſtinction. Beſides, that without copying the preciſe words, they often content themſelves with giving the ſenſe, either in more or in fewer terms. After this manner, any one who has read them with attention, cannot but know, the Fathers of the firſt century managed their quotations from the Old Teſtament. When therefore, in their writings, we meet with paſſages that are agreeable to what we read, or that are contained in the New Teſtament; as in quoting thoſe paſſages they only follow their common courſe, it is impoſſible that their not expreſsly naming the particular Authors from whom they have thoſe paſſages, can be any good reaſon for our ſuſpecting they had them ſomewhere elſe than from the Authors of the New Teſtament. Not to mention many inſtances, although *Polycarp* names not the Author, yet every body will allow, Lord *Bolingbroke* himſelf would not deny, that this paſſage, *Neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abuſers of themſelves with mankind, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God*, is taken from St. *Paul's* firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*. And when the ſame

Polycarp,

Polycarp, without naming the Author who reports it, tells us, that our Lord ſaid, *The ſpirit indeed is willing, but the fleſh is weak*, have we not equal reaſon to reſt aſſured, that this paſſage was certainly taken from St. *Matthew's* Goſpel? The poſſibility, for probability there is none, of *Polycarp*'s having taken this paſſage from another Goſpel, can no more induce me to ſuſpect, that he had it not from St. *Matthew*, than, for the ſame reaſon, I can be induced to ſuſpect, that *Pliny* had not theſe lines from *Virgil*,

—— Si qua me quoque poſſum
Tollere humo ——
—— Victorque virûm volitare per ora.
Quanquam O ——

Or that *Jamblicus* did not tranſcribe from *Porphyry* ſeveral paſſages in his life of *Pythagoras*.

I ſhall conclude with again obſerving, although the Fathers of the firſt century made uſe of other Goſpels, and from thoſe Goſpels might have taken ſome paſſages; yet this can in no degree infringe the credit of the New Teſtament; on the contrary, it tends to eſtabliſh its authority, as betwixt theſe Fathers, and the paſſages they may be thought to have tranſcribed from other Goſpels, and the writings of our Evangeliſts, there is an exact harmony and agreement; and all of them concur together in confirming the truth of the Goſpel-hiſtory.

But the authenticity of the Goſpel-hiſtory, is not the only thing to which Lord *Bolingbroke* is pleaſed to object. His Lordſhip objects likewiſe to the ſufficiency or perfection of the Scriptures. He goes along with the church of *Rome*, and apprehends, "That the Writers of the *Roman* religion have "ſhewn, that the text of Holy Writ is, on many "accounts,

" accounts, insufficient to be the sole *criterion* of or-
" thodoxy." And at the same time observing,
" That the Writers of the reformed religion have
" erected their batteries against tradition, which,
" the Papists are of opinion, must necessarily be
" added to the Scriptures, in order to make up a
" perfect standard whereby to judge of orthodoxy."
He tells the world, " That each side has been em-
" ployed to weaken the cause, and explode the sy-
" stem of his adversary." And whilst they have been so employed, " They have jointly laid their
" axes to the root of Christianity." And in this view of things, I doubt not but his Lordship must have been highly entertained, whilst he observed Papists wresting the Scriptures out of the hands of Protestants; and Protestants forcing Papists out of their traditions; and thus betwixt the two, the foundations torn up, and the whole structure overturned. It does not belong to my present argument to take notice of any such objections. But, as this objection is so noisy as to conclude in a *terrible dilemma*, I cannot altogether neglect it.

This noble Author apprehends, that upon what Papists and Protestants, one against the Scriptures, and the other against tradition, have advanced, men may be apt to reason thus: " If the Text has not
" that authenticity, clearness, and precision, which
" are necessary to establish it as a divine and a cer-
" tain rule of faith and practice; and if the tradi-
" tion of the church, from the first ages of it till the
" days of *Luther* and *Calvin*, has been corrupted it-
" self, and has served to corrupt the faith and pra-
" ctice of Christians, there remains at this time no
" standard at all of Christianity. By consequence,
" either this religion was not originally of divine
" institution, or else God has not provided effectu-
" ally

" ally for preserving the genuine purity of it, and " the gates of hell have actually prevailed, in con- " tradiction to his promise, against the church. " The best effect of this reasoning that can be hoped " for, is that men should fall into Theism, and sub- " scribe to the first proposition: He must be worse " than an Atheist who can affirm the last. The di- " lemma is terrible. Party-zeal and private interest " have formed it (*b*)" What his Lordship here means, when he tells us, that party-zeal and private interest have formed this *dilemma*, I am not able to understand. One would think, that by this way of expressing himself, he lays the foundation of his *terrible dilemma*, not in the holy Scriptures themselves, but in the passions and prejudices of men, who abuse the Scriptures, and by their party zeal and private interest pervert them to their own purposes. But whether herein the Reader may apprehend any inconsistency or not, that which here leads our noble Author to reduce Christianity to this dilemma, is his avowed opinion, that the Writers of the *Roman* church have made good their plea against the sufficiency of the Scriptures. And must we again enter the lists with the church of *Rome*, and repeat over the demonstrations of the vanity of tradition, and of the sufficiency of the holy Scriptures? I shall only observe, his Lordship either does not understand, or he is pleased to misrepresent, this controversy, the great pillar that bears the whole weight of his *dilemma*.

The church of *Rome* do by no means question the authenticity of the Scriptures; on the contrary, by their open and avowed confession, the Scriptures are true and genuine, and were given the world by the inspiration of God. They have indeed among them a great

(*b*) P. 180.

a great many articles of faith and practice, that are far, very far from having any foundation in the ſacred Text. And therefore that thoſe articles may bear the ſtamp of divine authority, they have recourſe to tradition, alledging, that beſides the doctrines taught by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, whereof we have an account in the Scriptures, there were a great many other articles delivered to the world by the ſame authority, which none of the Apoſtles committed to writing, but left to be handed down by oral tradition. So that, very conſiſtently with their having adopted a number of tenets wholly repugnant to the truths of the Goſpel, it is maintained by the church of *Rome*, that the Scriptures, without tradition, are no ſufficient rule of faith and manners. But how very uncertain and deceitful tradition is in conveying the knowledge, particularly of points of doctrine, every conſiderate man muſt be ſenſible. It has been demonſtrated by learned men, and, in real fact, nothing can be more certain, than that the tradition of the church, from the firſt ages of it till the days of *Luther* and *Calvin*, has been corrupted itſelf, and has ſerved to corrupt the faith and practice of Chriſtians, and is ſtill exerting its baneful influence, in an eſpecial manner, over the church of *Rome*. But, without mentioning the treacherous hold that a man has in depending upon tradition, it is apparent, that thoſe doctrines concerning purgatory, the praying and ſaying of maſſes for the dead, the worſhiping of angels and ſaints, the adoration of images and reliques, *&c.* which they pretend are derived from tradition, are incapable of being the matter of any divine revelation, and by no miracles whatſoever can they be proved to come from God. So that neither tradition, nor the doctrines therein ſaid to be conveyed as divine or neceſſary articles

articles of faith and practice, ought at all to be regarded. And happy would it be for the world, did all Christian churches devote themselves wholly to the heavenly purity and manly simplicity of the Gospel of *Christ*, and totally abandon not only Idolatry, but all the worldly mixtures, all the vain pageantry and childish amusements of will-worship and superstition.

But Lord *Bolingbroke* supports his *terrible dilemma* upon this other pretence: "The Text," says he, "has not that clearness and precision that are necessary to establish it as a divine and certain rule "of faith and practice." Which in order to confirm, he makes this observation: "Sure I am," says his Lordship, "that experience, from the first "promulgation of the Gospel to this hour, shews "abundantly with how much ease and success the "most opposite, the most extravagant, nay, the most "impious opinions, and the most contradictory "faiths, may be founded on the same Text, and "plausibly defended by the same authority (*i*)." In all this, indeed, our noble Author conspires with the church of *Rome*, who maintain the same doctrine, thereby meaning to justify their opinion concerning the infallibility of their church, either in Pope or Council, and their not suffering the people to read the Scriptures. But, as the clearness and precision of the sacred Text have been unanswerably made out, and I am not now concerned with such questions; I shall here only observe, that the Christian revelation being understood to come from heaven, in order to instruct mankind in the true measures of real happiness in both worlds, one may reasonably expect, that all the articles of faith and practice necessary to that purpose, shall be clearly proposed to

(*i*) P. 179.

the world and without ambiguity, in such a manner as every man of common sense, who attends to things of that nature, may be able to apprehend them. That this is the real case with respect to articles of practice, or of moral conduct, all comprehended in the love of God and the love of our neighbour, is beyond contradiction. And what is the article of faith, which the Scriptures make necessary to salvation, that an attentive mind cannot confess is revealed clearly, and with accuracy and precision?

The Creed of Christians is that which they commonly call the Apostles. Every article is expressly taught in Scripture, and to a common understanding they are plain and obvious, neither obscure nor ambiguous (*k*). I confess, that going beyond the bounds of revelation, and launching out into the abstruse disquisitions of philosophy, we may find ourselves entangled in inextricable difficulties. And when people, in the vanity of philosophising, or under the power of enthusiasm or superstition, or of any blind impetuous passion, party-zeal or private interest, forsake the sober dictates of reason and revelation,

(*k*) This article, "He descended into hell," is, in our language, obscure and doubtful; but understood from the original Text, Act. ii. 27. 31. upon which it is founded, it is clear and precise; ὁ κατελειφθη ἡ ψυχη αὐτῦ εἰς Ἅιδυ: It plainly imports, "He went into the state of other dead men," or, "Into "the place of departed souls," which expressly declares the reality of his death.

Εἶπυ ἔτι ζώει, ἠ ὁρᾷ φάος ἠελίοιο,
Ἤ ἤδη τέθνηκε, ἠ ἐιν Ἀΐδαο δομοισι.

Odyss. iv.

Εἴ μόι τις ὁδὸς δύο δείξειε, τὴν μὲν εἰς Ἅιδυ φέρυσαν, τὴν δὲ ἐπὶ τὸ βῆμα, ἥδιον ἄν τὴν ἑτέραν ἦλθον τὴν ἐυθὺ τῦ Ἅιδυ. Ælian. Var. hist. lib. 9. cap. 18.

velation, that are always conſiſtent together, and go about to explain the Scriptures by their own prejudices, they may pretend to found on the ſacred Text doctrines the moſt oppoſite and contradictory, and the moſt extravagant and impious. But every ſober and conſiderate man, thinking freely and without biaſs, muſt eaſily diſcern, that the ravings of vain philoſophy, or the infatuations of enthuſiaſm or ſuperſtition, or the ſuggeſtions of irregular paſſions, can neither be well founded on the ſacred Text, nor plauſibly defended by that authority.

Indeed, ſober and conſiderate men do differ with one another in matters of religion, and ſometimes in articles that may be thought of high concernment. But I verily believe, that, in all queſtions, where the differing parties have diſtinct and determined ideas, their differences are owing, not to their thinking differently, (unleſs when they apprehend the ſame object in different lights, altogether conſiſtent with one another,) but to their ſpeaking a different language. And as to thoſe queſtions, wherein our diſtinct perceptions fail us, and we are able to form no preciſe and determined ideas, which of neceſſity muſt happen, when we preſumptuouſly take upon us to explain the way and manner of the exiſtence of things, which, in no inſtance, whether it concerns body or mind, we are able to comprehend; theſe learned men, otherwiſe ſober, talking very learnedly in metaphyſical language, or in a particular ſet of ſchool-phraſes, whilſt in their minds they are all darkneſs and confuſion, cannot but claſh and interfere with each other. As therefore thoſe controverſies among Chriſtians, concerning what are counted the moſt important doctrines of the ſacred Text, do manifeſtly relate to the way and manner of the exiſtence of things; ſuch differences cannot be juſtly charged upon the Scriptures,

Scriptures, but ought to be imputed to the pride and presumption of human minds that set up to be wise beyond the sphere of reason, and above that which is written in the Word of God.

For my part, I know of no sort of difficulties that attend the objects of the Christian revelation, that do not likewise attend the objects of natural religion. So that to fly to Theism, as Lord *Bolingbroke* directs us, for relief from the difficulties of Christianity, will not free and disengage us; even there we shall find ourselves involved in endless disputes, and in unsurmountable difficulties. How grosly ignorant the Heathen were of the principles of Theism, the being and perfections of God, and the immortality of the soul, I have fully explained in my *Inquiry into the Extent of Human Powers with respect to Matters of Religion*; where the Reader may see the most opposite, the most extravagant, nay, the most impious opinions, and the most contradictory faiths, professed and defended by all the learned Theists of the Heathen world. Here I speak of mankind enlightened, from the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, with the knowledge of the true God. And in this enlightened state, after what manner, for example, the perfections of God are exerted in the creation and government of the universe, is among speculative men, a great question; it has been warmly debated; it is not yet, nor, in the present state of humanity, will it ever be decided. In general, I can say, that in giving scope to one's inquiries, how things exist in the divine mind, and how they are produced and directed, one comes to be overwhelmed with difficulties, without any hopes of being extricated. But with what difficulties soever such speculations may perplex and oppress me, and which in no degree I am able to dissipate, as they manifestly arise from the narrowness of my mind,

mind, or from the incomprehensibility of the divine nature; they can never, at any rate, determine me to reject what I know assuredly, either from reason or revelation, concerning that infinite Being: Otherwise I should be hurried away into universal Scepticism, against which Lord *Bolingbroke* openly declares. Thus, in my apprehension, the matter stands in the case of Theism, among sober, speculative persons.

But, as in no case it is possible to prevent the extravagancies of human nature, what his Lordship observes with respect to the same text of Scripture, may be observed likewise with respect to the divine perfections: And this noble Author could not but know, that the most opposite, the most extravagant, nay, the most impious opinions, and the most contradictory faiths, are founded on the same perfections of God, and defended by the same authority. Thus, from the goodness, and the wisdom, and the power of God, some people take upon them to prove, "There is no moral evil, no sin or wickedness in "the world, and therefore no punishment for sin "either here or hereafter (*l*)!" Nor is there any thing more common, than for mankind to measure God by themselves, and to bring him to their standard. Most certainly the disposition of human nature is the same now that it was formerly, when sinners had the folly to think, *That God was altogether such a one as themselves* (*m*). And every body knows, that the passions of men, among which party-zeal and private interest are none of the least powerful,

(*l*) Vid. The State of the Moral World considered, &c. By W. D. where this doctrine is avowedly maintained.

(*m*) Psal. l 21. Nemo novit Deum. Multi de illo male existimant, et impune. Senec. Epist. 31.

powerful, are capable of darkening and confounding the plaineſt truths, whether natural or revealed :

Jupiter eſſe pium ſtatuit, quodcunque juvaret.

As therefore ſuch general reflections ſeem ſufficient to oppoſe to the general objection here offered ; and Lord *Bolingbroke*'s bare opinion can never ſhake my confidence, that the Scriptures, without tradition, are a ſufficient rule of faith and practice; that the doctrines therein neceſſary to ſalvation are clear and preciſe, obvious to the underſtanding of every honeſt mind that attends to them ; and that the difficulties that ſeem to perplex them, concern the way and manner of the exiſtence of things, and take their riſe from the fond ſpeculations of idle Schoolmen and Philoſophers, in which ſort of difficulties Theiſm likewiſe greatly abounds; it appears to me, that his Lordſhip's *terrible dilemma* is meer empty noiſe, that can diſturb no man in his Chriſtian faith, or prevent his reſting aſſured, that God has provided effectually for preſerving the genuine purity of the Goſpel, and that the gates of hell have not yet, and never will prevail, in contradiction to his promiſe, againſt it.

If the Reader will reflect upon the dark ages of the church, when the whole Weſtern world were ſunk in the deepeſt ignorance ; when they were intirely over-run with barbariſm and bigotry; when Princes and people, the ſouls and bodies of men, were under the domination of the Popes of Rome, who, as the head of the church of God, and the vicars of *Jeſus Chriſt*, had uſurped the diſpoſal of both worlds; and, in this ſovereign character, not only depoſed Princes, and abſolved ſubjects from their obedience, interdicted

interdicted whole nations, and gave away kingdoms at their pleasure; but published bulls and decrees establishing the objects of worship, the doctrines, the religious rites and ceremonies, which mankind should believe and observe with respect to God, and saints, and images, and another world; at the same time pardoning sins, relieving from purgatory, and condemning to hell, or admitting to heaven, whom they pleased; I say, if the Reader will reflect upon those dark ages of the church, wherein the souls and bodies of men, as to the concernments of both worlds, were thus absolutely inslaved to the Popes of *Rome* and their Clergy, and at the same time consider, that the best and surest ground upon which such wild daring usurpations could be founded, would have been (what they might have called) the Holy Scriptures; and that, in those circumstances of the world, there was nothing to oppose, but every thing to favour their having them so founded; must it not be owing to the vigilancy of Providence over the sacred Text, preventing all dangerous and fatal attempts, that none of the *Roman* Pontiffs (as they still affect to call them) did ever take upon them to employ their infallibility, their sovereign uncontroulable power, in new-moulding the Scriptures, and in corrupting and perverting them, by omissions and additions, to their unhallowed purposes.

We see, that, after those days of thick darkness, when their absurd antiscriptural tenets came to be called into question, the Popes, and their Clergy, have strained every art, and done all in their power to wrest and force the Scriptures, as they now stand, to teach and maintain their doctrines and usurpations; for which purpose likewise, their Missals and Breviaries are stuffed with extravagant falshoods and absurdities. And, not to speak of that strange attempt, their

their Index Expurgatory; we ſee, that, in their verſions of the Scriptures into the modern tongues, they have ſo managed and turned the ſacred Text, as to make the world believe, that their canonizations, their proceſſions, their pilgrimages, their maſſes, or their ſacrifice of the maſs, *&c.* are the plain and expreſs doctrines of the New Teſtament (*m*). As therefore all this management manifeſtly betrays a violent diſpoſition to falſify the ſacred Text, according as one's purpoſes may require it, I cannot, I ſay, but think, that, whilſt the Popes of *Rome* had all power in heaven and earth, and it was of the laſt conſequence ſo to exert it, their having made no attempt to forge the Scriptures anew, or ſo to vamp them as they might have fully juſtified all their uſurpations, muſt be attributed to the watchful care of Providence, preſerving the ſacred Text from all ſuch adulterations and mixtures, as would have quite altered its inward frame, and rendered it wholly diſproportioned to its original deſign. Beſides, that in thoſe times of univerſal darkneſs and ignorance, when few of the Clergy were able to read *Latin*, or knew

(*m*) Vid. Serceſ. Popery an enemy to Scripture. In his critical hiſtory of the New Teſtament, chap. 31. F. Simon obſerves concerning le P. Veron, comme il eſtoit controverſiſte de profeſſion, il a ajuſté quelques paſſages à ſes Idées, comme quand il a voulu trouver la meſſe au chap. xiii. des Actes, vers. 2. ou il traduit, Les Apoſtres celebroient la meſſe au ſeigneur.—Ce n'eſt pas que Veron ſoit le primier qui ait traduit de cette maniere. Corbin, qui pour l'ordinaire eſt barbare, parce qu'il rend trop à la lettre les paroles de la Vulgate, a neanmoins traduit avant lui, Eux celebrans la ſainte ſacrifice de la meſſe. Upon which I cannot but tranſcribe this learned Critic's judicious remark concerning ſuch as would tranſlate the Bible: Il eſt vray, ſays he, qu'il ſeroit a deſirer que ceux qui ſe mêlent de traduire la Bible fuſſent ſçavans dans la theologie: mais ce doit être une autre theologie que celle qui regarde la controverſe; car il arrive ſouvent que les controverſiſtes voyent dans la Bible les choſes qui n'y ſont point, & qu'ils limitent quelquefois les mots ſelon leurs idées. Ibid.

knew what was contained in the Old or New Testament, as even then, some particular men were disposed to employ their time in camparing the different copies of the Bible published in former ages, and in transcribing the Scriptures in the most unbiassed and the correctest manner, with a faithful account of the various readings, the readiest way to settle the true meaning of the text, and a mighty security against all frauds and innovations; may not this be counted a further proof of the particular care of Providence, to preserve the genuine purity of the Gospel, and to make good his promise, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (n)?*

Upon the whole, I shall observe; as it may be justly said, that whilst the book of nature (the works of Creation and Providence) is preserved, mankind, rightly informed of the nature of things, have access to learn the principles of natural religion; so with equal reason it may be affirmed, that whilst the books of the Scriptures is preserved, mankind, free of prejudice, and sincerely desiring to do the will of God, have access to learn the principles of the Christian institution: And as the differences, the errors and absurdities, the impious opinions, and the contradictory faiths, into which people fall, from their misunderstanding the works of Creation and Providence, can never infringe the authority of the religion of nature; so neither can the differences, the errors and absurdities, the impious opinions, and the

(*n*) C'est une chose surprenante, que ces livres de Critique qui avoient été composés par des Ecrivains Latins, dans un temps que la Barbarie regnoit dans l' Europe, soient devenus si rares, qu'ils n'ayent été vûs que de très-peu de personnes. Il est difficile d'en trouver aujourd'huy dans les meilleurs bibliotheques: ce qu'on ne peut attribuer, ce me semble, qu'à la theologie scholastique qui survint peu de temps après. Id. ibid. chap. 9.

contradictory faith, that people fall into, from their misunderstanding the holy Scriptures, at any rate infringe the authority of the religion of *Jesus*.

But is it not a little surprising how this noble Writer has come to confound Christianity with Popery! why he insists upon it, "That the resur-"rection of letters was a fatal period to the Chri-"stian system, that Christianity has been attacked "and wounded too very severely, and has been in "decay ever since that time." I say, is it possible his Lordship could have had any thing here in his eye but the Romish religion, a system of religion utterly inconsistent with that of the Gospel? The resurrection of letters was most certainly the reviving of Christianity; or rather, the reviving of Christianity awakened a spirit of inquiry, brought in upon the world a most glorious light that scattered the thick clouds of idolatry, superstition and ignorance, wherein mankind had been long overwhelmed; and illuminating the human mind, pointed out the paths of all useful knowledge.

But these articles do not come within the compass of my present design. I hope I have made out what I intended, that the only particular objection offered by Lord *Bolingbroke* to the authenticity of the Gospel-history, is without all foundation; and that his Lordship's argument serves plainly to establish the contrary. So that, in confirmation of the truth of the history of the Gospel, to the testimony of Heathen Writers, I have now added the testimony of the Fathers of the first century, which testimony has been uniformly continued to the present time. And where is the history, whose authenticity is supported upon clearer, and fuller, and stronger evidence?

SECT.

SECT. III.

Vindicating the Gospel-history, particularly with respect to the Resurrection of Jesus, *from the Charge of Contradiction and Forgery.*

BUT all this evidence, of more than a thousand years standing, comes at length to be overthrown, in the opinion of one of our late moral Philosophers, as those self-sufficient Gentlemen, who despise revelation, now affect to call themselves. This Gentleman sets up to answer, *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of* Jesus, and means to shew, that the Gospel-history, as to that essential article of Christianity, is full of contradictions and inconsistencies, and must therefore be counted a forgery. So that I must beg leave to detain the Reader a little longer, whilst I consider this moral Philosopher's objections, and examine how far they are to be regarded. And, with this view, I judge it proper to lay down the following axioms:

1. As every man's life, especially of such as appear in any public character, is made up of a great variety of actions or events; and one cannot well expect in history, that every one of those events shall be recorded by one hand; so it is wholly in the choice and at the discretion of an Historian, what particular events or actions in any man's life shall be published to the world. When therefore different Historians take notice of different events, one cannot from hence immediately conclude, that those Historians disagree or contradict one another, and cannot therefore be credited.

2. After

2. After the ſame manner, as a great action, or a conſiderable event, may be attended with a great many circumſtances, or with a variety of other collateral actions or events; ſo it lying at the diſcretion of an Hiſtorian, what particular circumſtances, or which of thoſe collateral events ſhall be reported, when different Hiſtorians, agreeing as to the main action, happen to relate only different circumſtances, or ſome other collateral actions or events; from hence immediately to infer, that thoſe Hiſtorians contradict one another, and the main event is a forgery, is extremely abſurd and unreaſonable.

3. Again, as it intirely depends upon the judgment and choice of an Hiſtorian, what particular actions ſhall be tranſmitted to poſterity; ſo no Hiſtorian is bound to relate thoſe events and actions in the ſame order wherein they happened or were tranſacted, but is at full liberty to repreſent them, as in his apprehenſion they may ſeem connected in their own nature, or as his own particular taſte and view of things may direct him. However, therefore, different Hiſtorians may report actions or events differently connected, yet by no means does it from hence immediately follow, that thoſe Hiſtorians contradict one another, and their account of things is meerly fabulous.

The Reader perhaps will imagine, that I very needleſsly take notice of theſe axioms univerſally known and admitted in underſtanding hiſtory, or in judging of the truth and connection of events. But theſe axioms I chuſe here to offer to the Reader's attention, that he may ſee the foundation, upon which I propoſe to juſtify the character of the Goſpel-Hiſtorians, and to demonſtrate the falſeneſs of that charge of contradiction

diction and forgery, which this Gentleman is pleaſed to bring againſt them. Nor can I ſuffer myſelf to ſuſpect, that any man will queſtion the truth of theſe axioms, becauſe they are employed in the ſervice of revelation. They are regarded and held good every where elſe, and why not equally good in the preſent argument?

The method this Gentleman purſues in his attempt to prove the Apoſtles guilty of impoſture, in publiſhing the reſurrection of *Jeſus Chriſt*, is this: He firſt takes notice of ſome things relating to the reſurrection, that are ſaid to have paſſed before the crucifixion: He then conſiders ſome articles reported to have have happened while the body was lifeleſs, and in the power of death: And, laſt of all, he examines into the evidence itſelf, upon which the Apoſtles do admit the truth of the reſurrection, and recommend it to the belief of mankind. I ſhall follow him in this method, and repreſent things no otherwiſe than as common ſenſe and honeſty, in underſtanding any hiſtory, ſhall direct me. And, as I hate to deal in any thing that ſuits not the character of a lover of truth, or that bears the face of buffoonry, I will meddle nothing with thoſe impertinent reflections, or that impious raillery, with which our Philoſopher gives himſelf leave to diſgrace his argument. Nor will I trouble the Reader with all the little blunders, wherein he gives one the advantage over him.

In the *firſt* place, He undertakes to ſhow, that thoſe predictions alledged to have been made by *Jeſus*, concerning his reſurrection, are all forgery. And in order to make good this heavy charge, he begins with an attempt to prove, that the Evangeliſt *Matthew* reports a falſhood, when he tells us, that *the chief Prieſts and Phariſees came together unto Pilate, ſaying, Sir, we remember that this deceiver*

ceiver ſaid, while he was yet alive, after three days I will riſe again.

Here, I ſay, our Philoſopher does not mean to charge the chief Prieſts and Phariſees with ſo unrighteous a thing, as their going to *Pontius Pilate* with a lie in their mouth. No, Theſe are men of great uprightneſs and integrity, whoſe conſcience, for the world, would not ſuffer them to ſpeak a falſhood. Nor, in all the Gentleman's righteous performance, will you find one ſyllable to their diſadvantage. His deſign is, "to convince thoſe that believe they ſee, or that ſee only thro' faith's optics, that their blindneſs remaineth. It is to recover the dignity of virtue, to promote that veneration for wiſdom and truth, which has been debaſed and degraded by faith (*a*)." And, to a mind ſo piouſly affected, how can the Apoſtles of our Saviour appear any other but vile impoſtors, who, for more than theſe 1700 years, have been deceiving the world, and might have gone on to the end of time in the cheat, had not this moral Philoſopher, concerned for the good of mankind, and animated with an ardent love of truth, undertaken a fair inquiry, and happily detected the forgery. Here, therefore, we are told, that the whole of this addreſs to *Pilate*, reported to have been made by the chief Prieſts and Phariſees is meer fiction, and only put in their mouth by the Evangeliſt *Matthew*, while in truth they never did make any ſuch application. This is the Gentleman's opinion, with reſpect to an antient matter of fact, never before by any man contradicted. And in a charge ſo heavy and ſingular, it can be thought no unreaſonable thing, to expect and require proportional evidence.

As to this, we may truſt our moral Philoſopher's honeſty,

(*a*) p. 72.

honeſty, for producing all he is able to afford us, and rely upon his penetration, far ſuperior to that of any former Infidel, for diſcovering whatever can ariſe from the thing itſelf. "Now, ſays he, the words, *we* "*remember*, ſignify that they heard him ſay ſo. "But I find no account where, or when ſuch public "propheſy was delivered before the Prieſts and "Phariſees, in any of the four Evangeliſts (*b*)." Nay, "none of the Evangeliſts give the leaſt hint, "that *Jeſus* ever publicly declared to the Prieſts, "Scribes, Phariſees or Sadducees, that *after three* "*days he would riſe again*; nor when or where he "had made ſuch declaration, or any thing like it, "that plainly predicted his reſurrection to them; ſo "that this report wants confirmation, even among "the Evangeliſts themſelves (*c*)." This is the mighty evidence whereby our moral Philoſopher would prove a forgery upon the Evangeliſt *Matthew*. It all reſts upon a particular meaning, which he forces upon the word *remember*; as if, in common language, one cannot ſay, he *remembers* what another perſon ſaid, without his having heard that other perſon ſay ſo. I am apt to think our Philoſopher can ſay, he *remembers* that *Cicero* ſaid, *Nihil tam abſurde dici poteſt quod non dicatur ab aliquo philoſophorum*; and yet pretends not to have heard *Cicero* ſay ſo. And may not the Phariſees be allowed likewiſe to ſay, *we remember Jeſus ſaid, after three days I will riſe again*, though they never did hear *Jeſus* ſay ſo? This ſort of criticiſm ſhews the world, to what mean ſhifts the Gentleman is reduced, in order to juſtify his charge of forgery. If therefore he will be ſo good as to make it appear, that the chief Prieſts and Phariſees heard as little from other people, as he alledges they did from *Jeſus* himſelf, concerning his reſurrection, the world may then come

(*b*) p. 15. (*c*) p. 19.

come to judge more favourably of his accuſation. Mean while, in attempting a thing of this nature, our Philoſopher would do well to remember, that as the chief Prieſts and Phariſees did always narrowly watch *Jeſus*, had their ſpies continually about him, and at length prevailed upon one of his own Diſciples to betray him, who was as able to inform them, as they were willing to underſtand whatever our Saviour, in any inſtance, either ſaid or did; it ſeems impoſſible, if ever on any occaſion he foretold his reſurrection, but they muſt have heard of the prediction. And can any thing be conceived more natural than for *Judas*, while he was acting the traitor, to put the chief Prieſts and Phariſees upon their guard, warning them, particularly to look after the dead body, for that *Jeſus* had declared, that *the third day he would riſe again.* And having ſuch information, might they not, with great propriety, have expreſſed themſelves in the manner they did in their addreſs to *Pilate?*

But, in conſequence of his learned criticiſm, our Philoſopher having undergone ſo much hard labour in proving, that in all the Goſpel-hiſtory not the leaſt hint is given to the Prieſts and Phariſees, concerning the reſurrection of *Jeſus*; it may be deemed not ſo civil, to take no notice of what has coſt the Gentleman ſo much pains. Let it then be granted, that "we find no account, where, or when, any "public propheſy, concerning the reſurrection of "*Jeſus*, was delivered before the Prieſts and Pha-"riſees, in any of the four Evangeliſts:" Is it a rule in our Philoſopher's logic, that from hence it neceſſarily follows, that nothing of this nature ever happened? If, indeed, he will condeſcend to demonſtrate, that every particular declaration made by *Jeſus* to the chief Prieſts and Phariſees, is recorded in one

one or other of the four Evangeliſts, he will then have produced ſome evidence, upon which his charge of forgery againſt the Evangeliſt *Matthew* may be better founded: But, till he has obliged the world with ſomething of this nature, every equitable judge will give it againſt him. And, moſt certainly, it would be extremely hard to find an Hiſtorian guilty of forgery, meerly becauſe, while he repreſents ſome people to ſay they heard ſuch a particular, he gives no account where, or when, that particular was delivered in their hearing. So that, even granting it does not appear from any of the four Evangeliſts, where, or when, *Jeſus* foretold his reſurrection to the chief Prieſts and Phariſees, this is far from being any certain proof, that ſuch a prediction was never made to them. Nor does our Philoſopher himſelf ſeem quite clear and poſitive in the matter.

"None of the Evangeliſts, ſays he, give the leaſt "hint, that *Jeſus* ever *publicly* declared to the "Prieſts, and plainly predicted his reſurrection." *Publicly* and plainly. Pray, what does the Gentleman mean by theſe words———by putting the former in *Italic*, and thereby recommending it to our notice? If he means, that the Evangeliſts have given ſome hints, that *Jeſus* privately declared ſuch an event, or darkly or parabollically predicted it to the chief Prieſts and Phariſees, may not either of theſe ſerve to ſatisfy us, that the Rulers of the *Jews* had particular information from *Jeſus* concerning his reſurrection? The Gentleman ſeems apprehenſive, that ſomething of this nature may be intimated in the ſign of *Jonas* the Prophet, which our Saviour promiſes the *Jews* ſhould have: And therefore is he at ſo much pains, by ſo many ſilly reflections, to convince his Reader, that no ſuch thing can be underſtood by it. And yet our Philoſopher does not ab-

ſolutely aver, that this ſign of the Prophet *Jonah*, as it ſtands in St. *Matthew*, gives no intimation to the chief Prieſts and Phariſees of the reſurrection; he only ſays, "The words are ambiguous, and do not "plainly (*or pointedly*) indicate a reſurrection. "So that the Rulers could not certainly (*or aſſuredly*) know by this, that *Jeſus* was to die, and riſe "again (*d*)." Well then, by the Gentleman's own confeſſion, the chief Prieſts and Phariſees ſeem to have had ſome public hints, not indeed abſolutely clear and preciſe, but ſuch as might lead them to ſuſpect, that *Jeſus* meant to let them know, he was to die, and the third day to riſe again. And even but a ſlight ſuſpicion of this nature, every conſiderate man will allow, was ſufficient ground, a very good reaſon, for the chief Prieſts and Phariſees to make the addreſs they did to *Pontius Pilate*. But I am apt to think, that the Phariſees had more than a ſuſpicion as to our Saviour's meaning in this ſign of *Jonas* the Prophet.

"The words (ſays the Gentleman) are ambigu-"ous, and do not plainly indicate a reſurrection." But of this ambiguity, the Phariſees, I hope, muſt have been as ſenſible as our Philoſopher is. And, not to ſpeak of the force of meer curioſity, in a matter wherein a reſemblance to one of their own Prophets is foretold, would thoſe men who were ſo keen to watch every word and every action of our Saviour, and wanted only an opportunity to ruin him; would thoſe men have no concern to ſtrip the words of their ambiguity, and ſearch out their preciſe and determined meaning? The bleſſed *Jeſus* did not ſhun their converſation; they diſcourſed familiarly with him; in what things they wanted to be informed,

(*d*) P. 17.

informed, they freely propounded their queſtions; nay, ſometimes they went ſo far as *to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to ſpeak of many things*; *laying wait for him*, and ſeeking to catch ſomething out of his mouth, that they might accuſe him (*e*): And having been frequently referred to this ſign of the Prophet *Jonah*, as ſomething very conſiderable, which they might expect as deciſive of *Jeſus*'s character; if they underſtood it not, would not thoſe men, either out of curioſity or malice, be prompted to diſcover what our Saviour particularly meant by it?

But how comes our Philoſopher to tell us, "The "words are ambiguous, and do not plainly indicate "a reſurrection?" Does he pretend to meaſure the underſtanding of the chief Prieſts and Phariſees, in what relates to ſome particular phraſes and ways of ſpeaking in their own language, by the manner in which he thinks he would underſtand them? The bleſſed *Jeſus* makes this open declaration before the people of *Jeruſalem*; *And I*, ſays our Lord, *when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me* (*f*). Now, poſſibly the Gentleman may imagine, that the preciſe meaning of this prediction of our Saviour, is not to be underſtood; or he may call it ambiguous, and a prophetic riddle. And yet the multitude ſo well underſtood it, that therein, in their apprehenſion, *Jeſus* contradicted himſelf, or gave up the character to which he had hitherto pretended. *We have heard*, ſay they, *out of the law, that Chriſt abideth for ever. And how ſayeſt thou, the Son of man muſt be lift up? Who is this Son of man?* And the multitude ſo readily apprehending the meaning of thoſe ambiguous words, that myſterious and prophetic riddle, as our Philoſopher might call it,

(*e*) Luke xi. 53, 54. (*f*) John xii. 32, 34.

it, concerning the crucifixion of *Jesus*, may not the Rulers of the Jews, the Pharisees, be allowed as much sagacity, or as much knowledge of their own language, as to enable them to perceive the meaning of this other mysterious and prophetic riddle, more obvious, one should think, to human understanding, relating not only to the death, but the resurrection of *Jesus*. *As* Jonas *was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* Such forms of speech, familiar to the Jews, could have in them neither ambiguity nor mystery. In the case of the *Egyptian*, whom *David*'s men found in the field, we are told, that this young man *had eaten no bread, nor drunk water, three days and three nights:* And yet, on the third day of his sickness, (*I fell sick*, says he, *and this is the third day* (*g*),) *they gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water.* When therefore our Saviour tells the *Jews*, that he was to be *three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*, as they could not but understand their own language, they certainly understood him to mean, that *he was to die*, and *the third day to rise again*. So that the sign of the Prophet *Jonas* could be no mystery, no prophetic riddle, to the rulers of the *Jews*; it was expressed in their common language, and they could not mistake its meaning. And this our Philosopher himself cannot but acknowledge, if he stands to his own reasoning.

"None of the Evangelists," says he, "mention "the explanation annexed to the parable of *Jonah*, "but St. *Matthew* once. And as he had more oc- "casion for a prophesy of this nature than the o- "thers

(*g*) 1 Sam. xxx. 13. חָלִיתִי הַיּוֹם שְׁלִשָׁה

" thers had, to confirm his ſtory of the watch and " ſeal, which none of the others ſay any thing of ; " ſo, he adds ſomething more than they do, to this, " which is called a propheſy, but is rather a prophe- " tic riddle (*b*)." In which, if our moral Philoſopher means any thing at all, his meaning certainly is, that St. *Matthew* having a deſign, in the courſe of his hiſtory, to repreſent the chief Prieſts and Phariſees addreſſing themſelves to *Pilate*, as if they had heard from *Jeſus* himſelf, that *after three days* he would riſe again ; upon which they might procure an order to have the ſepulchre ſecured ; for rendering this ſtory more conſiſtent and probable, he judged it neceſſary to explain the ſign of the prophet *Jonah* in ſuch a manner, as it might appear a propheſy delivered by *Jeſus* before the chief Prieſts and Phariſees, determining the time of his reſurrection. And if this was the deſign of this Evangeliſt, had he not the common ſenſe to underſtand, what ſort of declaration would anſwer his purpoſe, or prove a plain and clear intimation to the Rulers of the *Jews* ? While therefore the Gentleman takes upon him to ſet things in this light, he ſhews the world how very fooliſh and abſurd it is to pretend, that this ſign of the Prophet *Jonah* was ambiguous, or a myſtery, a prophetic riddle to the chief Prieſts and Phariſees. The frequent mention of this ſign in the Goſpel-hiſtory, is a proof that it muſt have been well underſtood among the people. And ſurely the Phariſees were not quite ſo dull in apprehending the parables and figurative ſayings of *Jeſus*, as our Philoſopher ſeems to imagine (*i*).

But, the Goſpel-hiſtory affords us ſome further evidence, that the Rulers of the *Jews* had the reſurrection

(*b*) P. 19. (*i*) Luk. xx. 19.

rection of *Jesus* foretold to them. Our moral Philosopher, to prevent his being suspected of unfair dealing, is pleased to declare himself thus: "As I "have not," says he, "mentioned what St. *John* "says of *Christ*'s foretelling his resurrection, lest it "should be thought I stifle his evidence, I have ex- "amined him, and find that he says not a word of "it, but denies it all." A shameless assertion, and strangely expressed! I likewise have examined this Historian, and from his account of things, it appears to me as certain, as any historical fact whatsoever, that *Jesus* did openly foretel his resurrection to the Pharisees and whole body of the *Jews*. Thus our Saviour representing the *Jews* and their Teachers under the familiar metaphor of sheep and a shepherd, he professes himself the only true and faithful Teacher, or the good shepherd to whom the sheep belong, and who lays down his life for them. *I*, says our Lord, *am the good shepherd*; *the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*——*Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father* (*k*). Here, I say, I cannot but think, that the blessed *Jesus*, in the hearing of the Pharisees, publicly foretels his resurrection in the most express and positive manner, in such manner as gives them to understand, that unless he should raise his body from the grave, and return to life again, he would be found disobedient to the commands of his Father. Add, *I lay down my life, that I may take it again. This commandment I have received of my Father.* For what good reason our Philosopher, our moral Philosopher,

(*k*) Joh. x. 11, 17, 18.

ſopher, was pleaſed to aſſure his Reader, that St. *John* ſays not a word of *Chriſt*'s foretelling his reſurrection, but denies it all, he is himſelf beſt able to inform the world. I ſhall only obſerve, that this public declaration of our Saviour, ſo little ſuits the common language of mankind, and contains in it ſomething ſo very extraordinary and ſurprizing, ſo much beyond poſſibility in the common courſe of things, that it occaſioned a mighty diviſion among the *Jews*, as to the character of *Jeſus*. Many of them ſaid, *He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?* Others again ſaid, *Theſe are not the words of him that hath a devil, and is mad.* And, to juſtify their opinion, they appeal to a miracle he had lately done upon a man blind from his birth. *Can a devil*, ſay they, *or a man that hath a devil, and is mad, open the eyes of the blind?* Thus it is apparent, that the prediction concerning the reſurrection of *Jeſus* was made public to the world, well known to the Phariſees, and no ſecret in *Jeruſalem*. Indeed, the particular time when *Jeſus* ſhould riſe from the dead is not here mentioned or determined. But, when we recollect the ſign of *Jonas* the Prophet, and that therein our Lord expreſsly declared to the Scribes and Phariſees, that *The Son of Man was to be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*; they could be at no loſs as to this article. And, upon the whole, the Reader will judge, whether our Philoſopher's charge of forgery againſt *Matthew*, is well founded, or abſolutely falſe and calumnious.

I know not whether our Philoſopher's inward ſenſe of truth, may not ſometimes get the better of his prejudices; but he ſeems to allow, that the Phariſees were foretold of the reſurrection of *Chriſt*. "The Rulers," ſays he, "could not certainly "know by this ſign of the Prophet *Jonah*, that "*Jeſus*

" *Jesus* was to die and rise again, and be so much " alarmed about it as to watch and seal the sepul- " chre, who believed his miracles no more than his " Messiah-ship, and consequently gave no credit to " his prediction (*l*)." Here, I say, our Philosopher seems to acknowledge, the Pharisees had a prediction given them, concerning the resurrection of *Jesus*; only, in his opinion, they could give no credit to it, because they believed his miracles no more than his Messiah-ship. But from whence comes this Gentleman to know, that the Rulers of the *Jews* did not believe *Jesus* to be the *Messiah?* Does this article of his knowledge arise from any other evidence than that of the Gospel-history? And does not the same history as expressly testify, that the miracles of *Jesus* were so inconteſtible, so convincingly manifest to all the senses of mankind, that those Rulers, not being able to deny them, were forced to avoid their influence, by ascribing them to the efficiency of *Beelzebub?* So sensible were the Pharisees of the truth of the miracles of *Jesus*, that, though we find them, from some circumstances attending those miracles, greatly divided in their conclusions, concerning the character of *Jesus*, *whether he were of God*; yet no where do we find them differing in their opinions, as to the reality of the miracles themselves. Nay, so far were the Pharisees from objecting to the miracles themselves, as if they had been only meer deceit and imposture, that they watched *Jesus* when he should work them on the Sabbath day, that from this circumstance they might have matter of accusation against him. It was this circumstance, and not any suspicion of imposture, that inflamed their indignation; *There are six days*, say they to the people, *in which men ought to work*; *in*

(*l*) P. 17.

in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day (*m*). In short, so deeply were the Pharisees sometimes struck and alarmed by the miracles of *Jesus*, those standing proofs of his power and goodness, that, not able to restrain their angry and revengeful passions, they came to be *filled with madness* (*n*). How then comes our Philosopher to tell the world, "The Rulers of the *Jews* believed the "miracles of *Jesus* no more than his Messiah-ship?" His philosophy is of a very particular complexion, that enables him so openly to contradict matters of fact, supported by the fullest, the clearest, and strongest evidence. They did not indeed believe *Jesus* to be the *Messiah*; this is matter of reasoning: But they had it not in their power to disbelieve his miracles; this is matter of sensible perception. And it was his working them on the Sabbath-day, upon which they pretended to conclude, *He could not be of God.*

'Tis true, our Philosopher would have it, that "their demanding a sign from heaven, intimates, "that they were not satisfied, that he had done any "miracle, nor," says he, "does *Jesus*'s answer re-"fer them to any." This demand indeed intimates, that they were not satisfied with those beneficent miracles that were done upon the bodies of men; those, as I have said, they attributed to the power of the devil. They wanted other sort of miracles, a miracle from heaven, perhaps such a one as might represent in the clouds, the Son of Man, or their *Messiah*, pompously attended with all his hosts, taking vengeance on the nations, and gloriously triumphing over them. Such a miracle might have hit the taste, and answered the expectations of that *evil and adulterous generation.* But that generation having

(*m*) Luk. xiii. 14. (*n*) Luk. vi. 11.

been so obstinately wicked as to reject the authority of those many beneficent miracles, that were fully sufficient to convince the reason of mankind, they had no right to demand any farther or other miracle; nor could such a miracle as they wanted, suit the times, or serve to promote the present designs of Providence. *O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but*, says our Lord, referring them to those miracles he had wrought among them, and which only suit the kingdom of the *Messiah*, *can ye not discern the signs of the times?* One would think, that so far, in common sense, is this demand from intimating, that the Pharisees were not satisfied, that *Jesus* had done any miracle, that it rather intimates quite the contrary. It is, as if they had said, we have seen a great many of your miracles here on earth: But what are these! mean and inconsiderable, within the reach of *Beelzebub*, not proportioned to the glory of the *Messiah*: Let us have a proof of your power on high, a miracle *from heaven*. Thus they spoke in the wantonness of their heart, tempting our Saviour. They question not the truth of his miracles; they only want miracles of another nature. Their opinion therefore, as to the truth and reality of the miracles done by *Jesus*, could never prevent their giving credit to his prediction, in the sign of the Prophet *Jonah*, concerning his resurrection. So that we may well rest assured, that as the Evangelist *Matthew* represents them, *The chief Priests and Pharisees came together unto* Pilate, *saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again.*

Our Philosopher concludes this article with two remarks; the first relates to the time of the continuance of the body of *Jesus* in the grave, or the state of death. And this, he tells us, does not answer the prediction,

prediction concerning the Son of man, that he ſhould be *three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*. " For *Jeſus*," ſays he, " lay but the time " of one day and an half, that is, two nights and " a day, if he did that, for 'tis not known when " the body was gone; only it could not be found " at the end of the ſecond night. So that he lay " but half the time of three days and three nights " at moſt (*o*)." 'Tis needleſs to complain of this ſet of moral Philoſophers their ſtill repeating objections, without daring once to touch thoſe anſwers that have been ſo frequently made to them. I ſhall only here briefly explain theſe two different forms of ſpeech, *after three days*, and *three days and three nights*, which give occaſion to people's cavils.

We are told by *Mark*, that *Jeſus* taught his diſciples, that *after three days* he would riſe again (*p*). Now, the time here ſignified by the phraſe, *after three days*, when the reſurrection ſhould happen, is, by the other Hiſtorians, *Matthew* and *Luke*, reported to be *the third day*; each of them expreſsly declaring, that *Jeſus* ſaid to his diſciples, he was to be raiſed again *the third day*. And *Mark* himſelf, in all other inſtances wherein he mentions the time of the reſurrection, gives it out, as well as the other Hiſtorians, to be on *the third day*. So that a man of candour, when he compares things together, cannot but reſt ſatisfied that this phraſe, *after three days*, as it ſtands in *Mark*, can ſignify no other time but *the third day*. And certain it is, that in the language of the *Jews*, when they repreſent an event happening after ſo many days, *&c.* they plainly mean its happening on the laſt of thoſe days, *&c.* Thus *Rehoboam* ſaid unto the people, *Come again unto me after three days*, meaning, as the people underſtood him, *on the third day.*

(*o*) P. 19. (*p*) Mark viii. 31.

day. For, *ſo Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam* on the third day, *as the King bade them, ſaying, come again to me on the third day* (*q*). And we know that the Rulers of the *Jews* underſtood this form of ſpeech no otherwiſe; for, in their addreſs to *Pilate*, having told him, that *Jeſus* had ſaid, *after three days I will riſe again*, they beg he would command the ſepulchre to be made ſure (not beyond, but) *until the third day.* Theſe phraſes therefore, *after three days*, and *the third day*, are frequently of the ſame import, or have the ſame ſignification.

Again, our Saviour tells the *Jews*, that the Son of man ſhall be *three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* And as this phraſe, *three days and three nights*, here limits the time during which *Jeſus* was to remain among the dead, what is the propriety in the *Jewiſh* language, or the principle of common ſenſe, that can hinder us from underſtanding it in a conſiſtency with thoſe other phraſes, which expreſsly declare, that *Jeſus was to riſe again the third day?* Such a form of ſpeech may prove very ſtumbling to our Philoſopher; but it was quite eaſy and obvious to the *Jews.* Thus the *Egyptian*, mentioned above, who is ſaid to have faſted *three days and three nights*, did eat bread and drink water *on the third day.* And when our Saviour expreſſes himſelf after the ſame manner, telling the *Jews*, that he was to be *three days and three nights* in the ſtate of the dead, may he not be allowed to mean, and may not the *Jews* be allowed ſo to underſtand him, that he was to riſe again *the third day?* 'Tis altogether unfair in our Philoſopher, to deny the *Jews* the privilege of ſpeaking, and the ſenſe of underſtanding their own language.

But,

(*q*) 2 Chron. x. 5, 12.

But, to reduce this form of speech, *three days and three nights*, into a phrase more familiar to us, let it be observed, that, in the language of the *Jews*, *a night and a day* (νυχθήμερον) signifies no more than when they say barely, *a day:* For that these different forms of speech are used promiscuously, and what space of time they express by so many *days and nights*, the very same space do they express by an equal number of *days*. Thus we are told, that *the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights*; and, denoting the same space of time, it is likewise said concerning the same event, *and the flood was forty days upon the earth* (r). The meaning therefore of this prediction, *the Son of man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*, is plainly this, "the Son of man shall be "*three days* in the state of the dead." And in the room of *three days and three nights*, I chuse to substitute *three days*, a phrase of the same import; because it is more familiar to our ears, and may therefore prevent all confusion in our ideas. Nor needs our Philosopher scruple to admit of it, as it can by no means infringe the strength of his objection. Let it then be understood, that *Jesus* tells the *Jews*, as we would express it in our language, that he was to be *three days* in the state of the dead: And the objection is this,

"The event, as it is explained by the Gospel-"Historians themselves, does not answer the pre-"diction: For *Jesus* having expired upon the "cross about three afternoon on *Friday*, and re-"turned to life again, as it is reported, on *Sunday* "morning, towards the dawning of the day; it is "false, in fact, that he remained *three days* among "the dead." This is the objection.

And,

(r) Gen. vii. 12, 17.

And, if our Philoſopher here means, that *Jeſus* did not continue in the ſtate of the dead for the ſpace of *three full natural days*, he is abſolutely right. But I hope he will acknowledge, what the hiſtory puts beyond queſtion, that he remained in that ſtate "one whole day, and part of two other "days." Indeed, it would be idle to go about to determine, what proportion the time that *Jeſus* remained among the dead bears to the ſpace of three full natural days; but let it be two thirds, or, as the Gentleman would have it, one half of that ſpace: This notwithſtanding, in common language, it is true, that *Jeſus* was three days in the ſtate of the dead. We learn from *Suetonius*, that *Piſo*, before his murder, had lived ſix days in the character of *Cæſar*; and *Piſo* himſelf, in his ſpeech to the ſoldiers, as *Tacitus* reports it, mentions the ſame ſpace of time: "It is now," ſays he, "ſix "days, or, this is the ſixth day, ſince I was a-"dopted *Cæſar* (*s*)." And, upon the authority of the ſame *Tacitus*, who tells us, that "*Piſo* lived "but four days in that character (*t*);" would it not be ridiculous to object againſt the truth of this point of hiſtory, and to maintain, that *Piſo* bore the character of *Cæſar* only two thirds of the time alledged; "And," in our Philoſopher's learned reflections, "according to common computati-"on, and common ſenſe, ſix days can never be "four days; nor can any man make them ſo, tho' "he preach ſix days about it." The matter is, if we include the day of his adoption and the day of his murder, *Piſo* lived ſix days in the ſtate of a Prince. This, I ſay, is common computation and common ſenſe. And, after the ſame manner, including

(*s*) Suet. in Galb. cap. 17. Tacit. hiſt. lib. 1. cap. 29.
(*t*) Id. ibid. cap. 48. Vid. cap. 19.

cluding the day of his crucifixion and the day of his reſurrection, *Jeſus* was *three days* in the ſtate of the dead. And what is more common among mankind, than in their account of the continuance or duration of any event, to include the firſt and laſt days, the day in which it begins and the day in which it ends? Thus the *Iſraelites* and *Syrians* pitched one over againſt the other ſeven days; and yet in the ſeventh day the battle was joined (*u*). Thus likewiſe in the caſe of *Cornelius*, *Four days ago*, ſays *Cornelius* to *Peter*, *I was faſting until this hour*; and yet it is apparent, that the day of his faſt, and the day when he ſpoke thus to *Peter* (very probably before noon) muſt be included, in order to make up thoſe *four days ago* (*x*). Nay, the Gentleman himſelf ſeems to have ſtumbled into this way of computing days; for in his blundering account of the appearance of *Jeſus* to the two Diſciples going to *Emmaus*; "'Tis improbable (ſays he) that *Si-*
"*mon Peter*, who had, no longer than *three days be-*
"*fore*, eat, drank, and prayed with him, and
"fought for him, ſhould now walk with him a
"conſiderable way, and hear him diſcourſe a con-
"ſiderable time, and not know him (*y*)." So that our Philoſopher's objection, upon this article, has no countenance from common language, common computation, or common ſenſe; which all juſtify one's ſaying, *Jeſus* was *three days* in the ſtate of the dead.

Our Philoſopher's other remark is this: "If no
"ſign was to be given to that evil and adulterous
"generation, but the ſign of *Jonas* the Prophet, the
"only proof of *Jeſus* being the *Meſſiah*, depended
"upon that ſign being given, or that propheſy be-
"ing

(*u*) 1 Kings xx. 29. (*x*) Acts x. (*y*) P. 43.

" ing fulfilled, to the ſatisfaction of that evil and " adulterous generation.——But, as *Jeſus* did not " appear after his reſurrection to them (but to his " diſciples only) that propheſy was not fulfilled in " fact (z)." Here the Gentleman ſeems to think, that *Jeſus* had promiſed to appear, after his reſurrection, to that generation; but no ſuch promiſe is any where made. And for what good reaſon our Saviour did not appear to all people, but to his Diſciples only, I ſhall have occaſion afterwards to explain. At preſent, I ſhall only obſerve, that our Philoſopher thinks quite out of character, or has no underſtanding of the nature of things, when he affirms, that this *ſign* of *Jonas* the Prophet, as it here ſignifies the *death* and *reſurrection* of *Chriſt*, was not given to that evil and adulterous generation. According to my philoſophy, I am led to think, that this ſign was given, not only to that generation, but to all generations after. The ſign foretold, is *the continuance of* Jeſus *three days among the dead*, and *his riſing again the third day*. Theſe are matters of fact, and if there was then ſufficient evidence (as in the courſe of this argument I ſhall ſhew there was) for the truth and certainty of theſe facts, the ſign was undoubtedly given to that generation; and while that evidence is preſerved or continues, the ſign is ſtill ſet forth to the obſervation of mankind in all ſucceeding ages and generations. So that this prediction, for ought our Philoſopher has yet ſaid, was certainly fulfilled; and there is nothing here that can leſſen the credit of the Goſpel-hiſtory. At the ſame time, the Gentleman may remember, that that ſort of miracles which the *Jews* wanted, *ſigns from heaven*, attended the fulfilling of this prediction, whereby even their unreaſonable demand was ſo

(z) P. 20.

so far answered: *There was darkness over all the earth: The vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom: The earth did quake: The rocks rent: The graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept, arose, and came out of their graves, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*

Thus far I have justified the Evangelist *Matthew*, in his representing the chief Priests and Pharisees as apprised of the resurrection of *Jesus*. I shall now consider, what the Gentleman alledges with respect to the prediction of the resurrection, said to be made to the Disciples.

And here, says he, "According to three Evan-"gelists, I find, that *Jesus* had foretold his death "and resurrection, no less than five times to his "Disciples only (*a*)." Very well, may not the testimony of three Evangelists be allowed sufficient evidence as to the truth of this article? No; "There "is reason to suspect," says our Philosopher, "all the "predictions of the resurrection, inserted in St. *Mat-*"*thew*, St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke*, to be forgery (*b*)." And what is this mighty reason? Why, *Jesus* is said to have foretold his death and resurrection to the Twelve, as plainly as words could express it; and yet, by their own confession, *they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.* An honest declaration, one should think, and a strong presumption of their sincerity, as meaning only to tell naked truth. "But (says the Gentleman) I am jea-"lous of some fraudulent design, by this unaccount-"able confession. Sure, this is as surprising as any "thing in the Gospels, that twelve men together "should not understand such plain expressions. "For their understanding, or this passage is to

(*a*) P. 20. (*b*) P. 24.

" be queſtioned (*c*)." With all my heart; let their underſtanding be queſtioned. But did they not underſtand what was meant, by *a man's being mocked, and ſpitefully intreated, and ſpitted on*; *his being ſcourged*; *and put to death*; *and the third day riſing again?* Yes, ſurely, they underſtood the meaning of theſe plain expreſſions, and underſtanding them in their plain, common meaning, *Peter*, when he firſt heard them, *took his Maſter, and began to rebuke him, ſaying, Lord, this ſhall not be unto thee.* Upon which, our Saviour gave *Peter* ſo ſevere a check, that at any time after, when the ſame prediction was repeated, the Diſciples were afraid to aſk him about it. But, if it be thus certain, that the Diſciples underſtood the meaning of this prediction; why is it ſtill ſaid, *they underſtood none of theſe things, and this ſaying was hid from them, neither knew they the things that were ſpoken?* Now, may not our Philoſopher, for the ſake of his neighbour's character, condeſcend to take this paſſage by its beſt handle, or to put the moſt favourable conſtruction upon it, ſo as to make things, if poſſible, to conſiſt and agree together? God forbid I ſhould deſire the Gentleman to forego his character, to forſake, on any conſideration whatſoever, the nature and relations of things, or in any inſtance to go croſs to their information. No, I am willing to go along with him in a religious regard to theſe principles: And, in this courſe, I am in hopes we ſhall be able to diſcern, in what particular ſenſe the Diſciples are ſaid not to have underſtood this prediction of their Maſter.

Here then let us recollect, that as the Apoſtles had come to reſt confident, that *Jeſus* was their *Meſſiah*; ſo they went upon a perſuaſion, firmly rooted in their minds, that here on earth no oppoſition ſhould ſtand

(*c*) P. 23.

ſtand before their *Meſſiah*, that he would appear a glorious triumphant conqueror, and abide for ever, not ſubject to death, an univerſal Monarch, having the Gentiles under his dominion, reigning always invincible in great power and majeſty. And, no doubt, they expected, what appears to a Philoſopher extremely natural, but provides the Gentleman a ſubject of ridicule (*d*), that in this kingdom of the *Meſſiah*, they ſhould be no inconſiderable perſonages. Such, I ſay, was the nature and relations of things, as the Apoſtles apprehended them in the character of *Jeſus* their *Meſſiah*. Now, when they are told, that this very perſon ſhall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and ſhall be mocked, and ſpitefully intreated, and ſpitted on, that they ſhall ſcourge him, and put him to death, and the third day he ſhall riſe again; can any man think it poſſible for them to comprehend, how ſuch violent contradictions can ever have an exiſtence in the character of their *Meſſiah?* Before they could conceive the poſſibility of ſuch events, they muſt either renounce the character, which they and the whole nation had formed of their *Meſſiah*; or they muſt deny *Jeſus* to be that perſon. But, as neither of theſe was capable of entering into the thoughts of the Apoſtles, and they were reſolute in adhering to the national opinion about the *Meſſiah*, and to *Jeſus* as that perſon; this, beyond queſtion, put it out of their power to ſuſpect, that ever ſuch predictions ſhould be ſeen accompliſhed in the caſe of their Maſter. And does not this clearly ſhew us, in what particular ſenſe, or how truly and juſtly it is ſaid, that *they underſtood none* of theſe plain expreſſions, wherein *Jeſus* foretold to them his death and reſurrection? It was therefore the nature and relations of things, as they apprehended them, in the character

(*d*) P. 35.

cter of their *Meſſiah*, or, in common language, it was their prejudices that occaſioned their underſtanding none of theſe things, that hid this ſaying from them, *the third day I will riſe again*; ſo that *they knew not the things that were ſpoken*; they were not able to reconcile ſuch predictions to the character of their *Meſſiah*, but eſteemed them quite contradictory. No wonder then, when they heard *Jeſus* repeating theſe predictions, and ſtill inſiſting upon his being involved in ſuch melancholy events, that the Apoſtles came to be exceeding ſorry. Nor can the nature of things highly commend the juſtneſs and delicacy of our Philoſopher's wit, while he ridicules the Apoſtles in this ſituation. "'Tis," ſays he, "equally ſtrange, that they ſhould be ſorry "for what they did not underſtand; as that they "ſhould not underſtand what they were ſorry for; "except they were ſorry they did not underſtand "it (e)." *Quid rides?*——'Tis equally ſtrange, that the Gentleman ſhould laugh at what he does not underſtand; as that he ſhould not underſtand what he laughs at, except he is laughing he does not underſtand it.

But, our Philoſopher goes farther, and would perſuade us, from the Evangeliſts *Luke* and *John*, that this article of our Saviour's foretelling his death and reſurrection, is nothing but meer forgery. And, for this purpoſe, he informs us, that in their account of this prediction, as it was made to the Diſciples, by the Gentleman's calculation, for the third time; while *Matthew* and *Mark* diſtinctly report, that *Jeſus* foretold, not only that he ſhould be delivered into the hands of men, but that he ſhould be killed, and the third day riſe again; we learn no more from *Luke*, than that *Jeſus* ſaid, *the Son of man ſhall be*

(e) P. 22.

be delivered into the hands of men, without hinting at his death and resurrection. "Now," says our Philosopher, "if *Jesus* then foretold it, as St. *Matthew* "and St. *Mark* say, I wonder St. *Luke* did not men- "tion it." This (continues he) "like a ray of "light, discovers that *some enemy to truth, in the* "*night, has sown tares among the wheat* (*f*):" Meaning, that by *Luke*'s relating no more, the whole forgery becomes apparent. But, granting that what St. *Luke* here reports was said at the precise time, to which *Matthew* and *Mark* have affixed their account of things, which no man who attends to the history, can well imagine; by what rule or maxim in philosophy does the Gentleman pretend to teach us, that by St. *Luke*'s telling us only a part of the prediction (which, a little before, he had mentioned in all its parts) we must conclude, that what more is reported by the Evangelists *Matthew* and *Mark*, is forgery? I violently suspect, that, notwithstanding our Philosopher's great zeal for truth, which inspired him to engage in this argument, this his use of philosophy must be held a daring prostitution of the heavenly gift, naturally the powerful guardian of truth, but here enforced to serve a man's prejudices, and to do the dirty work of the poorest sophistry. Of so extraordinary a nature is this Gentleman's way of reasoning, that it puts it in a man's power, in most instances, when two or more Historians take notice of the same event, to prove a forgery upon which of them soever he pleases, either upon the one or the other, as his design may determine him. Here we must think, *Luke* is a faithful Historian, worthy of credit; and *Matthew* and *Mark* are void of veracity, not to be trusted; because, forsooth, it answers the Gentleman's purpose:

But,

(*f*) P. 22.

But, had his design so directed him, his Logic, with the same ease, would have proved quite the contrary. Possibly, our Philosopher may claim some exemptions and privileges peculiar to himself; but should any other man employ his philosophy at this rate, the World, I am afraid, must judge him a contemptible babler, unworthy the name of a Philosopher, and deserving to be hissed out of the Republic of Letters.

But, the Gentleman's evidence, which he pretends to fetch from the Evangelist *John*, rises higher. "As I have not," "says he, "mentioned what "St. *John* says of *Christ*'s foretelling his resurrecti-"on to his Disciples; lest it should be thought I "stifle his evidence, I have examined him, and find, "that he says not a word of it, but denies it "all." As I have already considered this bold, shameless assertion, and from *John*'s account of things made it appear, that, in the presence of his Disciples, *Jesus* foretold his resurrection to the *Jews*; I shall here further explain, that this Evangelist has likewise informed the world, that the same events were foretold to the Disciples alone. I know not what might be the effect of our Philosopher's re-examining this history; but every man of common eyes and common understanding, who reads from ver. 31. of chap. xiii. to chap. xvii. must soon be sensible, that these predictions are frequently repeated, urged, and pressed upon the Apostles. *Now*, says our Lord to his Disciples, *is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. Little Children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and, as I said unto the* Jews, *whither I go ye cannot come, so now I say unto you.* This, it would seem, struck the Disciples

Disciples with some prospect of great danger, so that being greatly alarmed, *Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.* But such was the danger just now approaching, and wherein they were immediately to be involved, that *Jesus* gives *Peter* to understand, that *the cock should not crow, till he had denied him thrice*; so far would he be from having the fortitude, on this occasion, to lay down his life for his sake. Thus the Apostles, still alarmed with impending dangers, are greatly troubled, and sorrow filleth their hearts. Upon which, our Saviour goes on to comfort them, telling them, that he was indeed to leave the world, but it was in order to go to the Father, and he would come again unto them. Nor should it be long betwixt his leaving them, and their seeing him again. *A little while*, says our Lord, *and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.* But the Apostles not knowing what to make of all this, our Saviour employs a strong image, to represent to them the inevitableness of their sorrow, and its short continuance; and, at the same time, the certainty of their joy, and how secure they should be in its possession; both which should arise from what was immediately to befal him. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye shall weep and lament, but the World shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but, as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice,*

joice, and your joy no man taketh from you. A caſe, in its cauſes and effects, with vaſt propriety repreſented by the above image. But neither yet do the Apoſtles herein underſtand the meaning of our Saviour. So that, he tells them plainly, *I came*, ſays our Lord, *forth from the Father; and am come into the world: Again I leave the world, and go to the Father.* This, at length, the Apoſtles ſeem to imagine they had ſome notion of. But our Saviour ſtill lets them know, that dangers are at hand, that they ſhould all forſake him, and leave him alone in the hands of his enemies. *Behold*, ſays our Lord, *the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye ſhall be ſcattered, every man to his own, and ſhall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, becauſe the Father is with me. And theſe things I have ſpoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world, ye ſhall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.* Thus our Saviour forewarns his Diſciples of impending dangers, and comforts them in the proſpect of ſpeedy and certain deliverance, of ſucceeding joys, which no man taketh from them. He tells them, that he is to go away, and to leave the world;—that he is to come again, and they ſhall ſee him;—that he is to go to the Father, in whoſe houſe are many manſions, where he is to prepare a place for them. And this, ſays our Lord to his Diſciples, *I have told you, before it come to paſs, that when it is come to paſs, ye might believe.*

Now, in all this, is there not a word concerning the death and reſurrection of *Jeſus Chriſt*, nothing that intimates ſuch events to his Apoſtles! It is unimaginable to me, in what particular ſenſe the Gentleman's philoſophy directs him to underſtand theſe paſſages. Does not *Chriſt*'s leaving the world ſignify his death? Does not his coming again, when his Diſciples

Diſciples ſhall ſee him, ſignify his reſurrection? And, does not his going to the Father ſignify his aſcenſion? It ſeems a problem, only to be ſolved by our Philoſopher, whether he has ever read this hiſtory. But I muſt eſteem it ſtill more ſurpriſing, that he takes upon him to aſſure us, that this Evangeliſt denies it all, all that the other Evangeliſts have reported concerning the predictions of the death and reſurrection of *Jeſus!* What is the complexion of the Gentleman's philoſophy one may think pretty apparent; and indeed it ſeems to intitle him to entertain the world with very bold aſſertions, that openly inſult, and would inthral the common ſenſe of mankind.

But our Philoſopher's evidence from the Evangeliſt *John*, for proving the predictions of the reſurrection to be forgery, is not yet ended. He goes on, and would have us believe, that this Evangeliſt ſpeaks out the truth, and has betrayed the cheat. "St. *John*, ſays he, tells the moſt probable truth, "that the Diſciples knew not any propheſy, that "*Chriſt* was to riſe again. What elſe do theſe "words mean; *they knew not the Scriptures, that he* "*muſt riſe again from the dead* (*h*)? If St. *John* "means the Scriptures of the Prophets, how ſhould "they? for none ſuch are to be found (*i*)." But does the Gentleman here deſign his Reader ſhould underſtand, that St. *John* means to inform the world, that, as the Diſciples knew not any propheſy, that *Chriſt* was to riſe again; ſo neither is there any ſuch propheſy contained in the Old Teſtament? So far as I am able to underſtand common language, it appears to me, that this Evangeliſt plainly intends the clean contrary. He tells us, that *Mary Magdalene*, who

(*h*) John xx. 9. (*i*) P. 23.

was early at the ſepulchre, having given them notice, that *they had taken away the Lord out of the ſepulchre*, both he and *Simon Peter* ran immediately to the ſepulchre; and that, miſſing the body, he himſelf believed, as the women had ſaid, that they had taken away the Lord out of the ſepulchre; for as yet *they knew not the Scriptures, that he muſt riſe again from the dead.* And is not this plainly telling the world, that though in the Scriptures it is foretold, that *Chriſt* muſt riſe again from the dead; yet at that time, to which the Evangeliſt refers, they knew not ſo much? Nothing more obvious. Nor has the Gentleman reaſon to alledge, that in the Old Teſtament there is no propheſy to be found relating to the reſurrection of *Jeſus*. He may for himſelf explain ſuch paſſages, as his own notions of things will permit him. In fact, it is certain, that the Apoſtles inſiſt upon ſuch propheſies and from thence go about to prove the neceſſity of *Chriſt*'s riſing again from the dead. No truth therefore is here ſpoken out by the Evangeliſt *John*, that diſcloſes a cheat, or that faſtens a forgery upon the other Evangeliſts. The direct contrary is plainly intimated. It is indeed apparent, that notwithſtanding thoſe propheſies, and the expreſs declaration of *Jeſus* himſelf, that he was to ſuffer death, and to riſe again, the Diſciples neither foreknew, nor expected the reſurrection of their Maſter: But this, as I have already explained, neceſſarily aroſe from their prejudices, or from the nature and relations of things, as they apprehended them in the character of their *Meſſiah*. So that our Philoſopher's premiſes are very good, nothing can be truer; *the Diſciples neither foreknew, nor expected the reſurrection:* But his concluſion is wretchedly bad, nothing can be falſer; therefore,

therefore, " there was no prophesy concerning this " event, nor did *Jesus* himself foretel it."

I have here only further to observe; I am sorry our Philosopher gives himself leave to act so much out of character, as to overlook all the beauties in the conduct of other people, and to be only concerned to find out blemishes, or to be pointing them out where they are not to be found. In several instances, our Saviour, when he foretold his death and resurrection, chose to do it to his twelve Disciples only. Now, from this circumstance, the Gentleman is pleased to insinuate, there is reason to suspect, that the whole of this prediction was the contrivance of the Apostles, and that they gave it out to have been made to themselves only, that they might prevent a detection from other people. Men's prejudices make them capable of conceiving things in a strange light. But 'tis great pity that a *moral Philosopher* should be so far carried away, as to put the worst constructions upon the best actions. In two instances particularly, our Saviour is very pointed, in explaining to his Apostles the circumstances of his death. *Behold*, says our Lord, *we go up to* Jerusalem; *and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief Priests, and unto the Scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him (k).* That there was good reason for the blessed *Jesus* his being so particular to his Apostles, every considerate man will confess. But, as it sometimes happened, that our Saviour came to be vastly popular, so extremely high in the affections of the people, that they would have run all hazards to preserve him; had he publicly

(k) Mark x. 32, 33.

ly expreſſed himſelf in ſo particular a manner, and openly told the *Jews*, that the chief Prieſts and Scribes had formed a deſign to murder him, or to deliver him up to the *Gentiles* to be crucified; would not this have expoſed thoſe Gentlemen to the fury of an enraged multitude, who, in a fit of their paſſion for *Jeſus*, might have been hurried on to take vengeance of thoſe his mortal enemies? How, in the nature and relations of things, ſuch an event could have been prevented, is not very obvious. Was it not then wiſe and prudent, kind and beneficent, a moſt peaceful and generous diſpoſition in *Jeſus*, that he was thus particular to his Apoſtles only, and ſaid no more in public to the bulk of his Diſciples, or to the *Jews*, but in general that he was to be delivered into the hands of men, and to be ſlain? Nay, even thus much he frequently repreſents in figurative expreſſions; and ſo delicate is he upon this matter, that he forms, as it were, an excuſe for his murderers; *No man*, ſays he, *taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myſelf; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.* I confeſs, in ſome of his parables, *Jeſus* ſets forth the chief Prieſts and Scribes, as they underſtood it themſelves, as the perſons who ſhould put him to death: But, I ſay, as one may learn from two of thoſe predictions, *viz.* the 1ſt and 4th, tranſcribed by the Gentleman, it is only to his Apoſtles that in expreſs terms he mentions the particular perſons; in all other inſtances, whether to his other Diſciples or to the *Jews*, as appears, not only from the other predictions in the Gentleman's collection, but from ſeveral other paſſages, he foretels the event in general terms, in parables, or in figurative expreſſions, and this I cannot but apprehend, muſt be counted a great beauty in the conduct of our bleſſed Saviour.

Thus

Thus it appears (in contradiction to our Philoſopher (*l*),) "There is no reaſon to ſuſpect all or a-"ny of the predictions, concerning the reſurrection "of *Jeſus*, inſerted in St. *Matthew*, St. *Mark*, and "St. *Luke*, to be forgery."

So that I now come along with the Gentleman, to conſider the *ſecond* period of time, which reaches from the death of *Chriſt* to his reſurrection: Upon which our Philoſopher pretends to ſhow, that the ſepulchre was neither ſealed nor guarded; and that in the caſe of the ſoldiers there could be no bribe.

Upon the former article I have made it evident, that *Jeſus* did certainly foretel his death and reſurrection to the chief Prieſts and Phariſees, and with more particular circumſtances to his twelve Apoſtles. What evidence, therefore, againſt the ſealing and guarding of the ſepulchre, our Philoſopher pretends to bring from the caſe of ſuch predictions having never been made, cannot be admitted. So that there can be here no ground for this ſort of reaſoning: "The propheſy of *Jeſus* concerning his riſing again, "was ſo far from being publicly known to all *Je-*"*ruſalem*, that the Diſciples did not know it. For "all the Evangeliſts ſhew, that a reſurrection was "what they did not expect. Then how ſhould any "any body elſe know it? And if ſuch propheſy "was not known, how ſhould the ſepulchre be "ſealed and watched (*m*)?" I ſay, as there is upon this article no foundation for any ſuch reaſoning, I ſhall here conſider what our Philoſopher propoſes from other topics.

"And (ſays the Gentleman) if we take the opi-"nion of the chief Prieſts and Phariſees from their "own words, as delivered by St. *Matthew*, they "believed

(*l*) P. 24. (*m*) P. 37.

" believed *Jesus* was a deceiver; and appear afraid " not of his rising in the day, but of the Disciples " stealing him away in the night (*n*)." But that the chief Priests and Pharisees had no apprehension of this nature, and cannot therefore be understood to have sealed and guarded the sepulchre, our Philosopher labours to prove from the situation of the Apostles, their having no expectation of the resurrection of *Jesus*; and no design of stealing away his dead body, as the Gentleman's bold unfortunate friend, Mr. *Woolston*, took upon him to alledge.

That the Apostles had no prospect of the resurrection of *Jesus*, but upon his crucifixion, gave up all for lost, without having any design upon the dead body, is a most certain truth. But how should the chief Priests and Pharisees have come to know thus much concerning the inward sentiments of the Apostles? " Why, (says the Gentleman) suppose now " the Priests and Pharisees went the next day to " set the watch, as St. *Matthew* reports, did they " not look into the sepulchre to see if the body was " there? And if they saw the body, they must " needs see how it was spiced, and preserved for " keeping, if it was done; they could not see one " without the other. And would they not then, " being witnesses of that, have taken the soldiers " back again with them, resting contented that the " Disciples knew nothing of any prophesy of his " rising again, and therefore could have no design, " under that pretence, to steal away the body, and " report he was risen (*o*)." Thus it was that the Rulers of the *Jews* entered into the thoughts and designs of the Apostles. And if Politicians are so soon satisfied as to people's designs, and are so easily put

(*n*) P. 29. (*o*) P. 25.

put off with ſuch appearances, where their own intereſts are concerned, it is as ſtrange as any thing that has ſurpriſed our Philoſopher. The chief Prieſts and Phariſees found the body buried after the common manner, *wound in linen cloaths with the ſpices, as the manner of the* Jews *is to bury*; and does the Genleman really think, that from hence they come to conclude, and to reſt contented, the Apoſtles had no deſign of ſtealing away the dead body? Having been foretold of the reſurrection of *Jeſus*, they apprehended greater danger from the opinion prevailing, that he was riſen, than from any thing that had yet happened; and, I incline to think, that Rulers and Miniſters of State know mankind too well to venture their own and the nation's ſafety upon the certainty of ſuch concluſions as this of our Philoſopher's. In puſhing on his reaſoning, he propoſes indeed this very wiſe queſtion, when they found the body buried in common form; "Would they, ſays "he, expoſe themſelves to ridicule by ſetting a "watch, and ſealing the ſepulchre (*p*)?" Why truly, in my apprehenſion, as the chief Prieſts and Phariſees had inſinuated to Pilate, that *his Diſciples might come by night and ſteal him away*, and had no reaſon from what they ſaw at the ſepulchre to abate their ſuſpicion, had they not taken this precaution, they would have become the objects of the juſteſt ridicule. It cannot therefore but be allowed, that the parts of this hiſtory, do as yet very well conſiſt and agree together.

But our Philoſopher will needs have the Apoſtles honeſt men in one article, "their having no deſign "to ſteal away the dead body;" that he may prove them villains in another article, "their re-

"porting

(*p*) P. 26.

" porting the ſealing and watching the ſepulchre." Conſider now their caſe: " Their Maſter was dead, " and they are to contrive to ſteal away his body: " For what? Did they expect to make a King of " the dead body, if they could get it in their " power? Or did they think, if they had it, they " could raiſe it to life again? Or, if they trùſted ſo " far to their Maſter's prediction as to expect his " reſurrection, (which I think it is evident they did " not) could they think the reſurrection depended " on their having the dead body? It is in all views " abſurd." Thus our Philoſopher is pleaſed to adopt the Chriſtian reaſoning, whereby it is demonſtrated, that the Diſciples could not poſſibly be guilty of ſtealing away the dead body, and pretending *Jeſus* was riſen. And ſays the Gentleman, " Are " not theſe reaſons as ſtrong againſt the Prieſts and " Phariſees ſetting a watch to prevent the Diſciples " ſtealing the body; as it is, that the Diſciples " ſhould attempt it? Could not thoſe think and " reaſon thus as well as theſe? Why then ſhould " they take theſe unneceſſary precautions? Here " the abſurdity of guarding againſt a fraudulent re- " ſurrection is well ſhewn (*q*)." But here our Philoſopher has not well conſidered the nature of things. The force of this argument, on the ſide of Chriſtianity, proving that the Apoſtles cannot be ſuſpected of ſtealing away the body of *Jeſus*, depends upon the ſituation of the Apoſtles in their notions of things, their views and intereſts, which, we certainly know, could in no ſort be anſwered without having *Jeſus* alive among them: And this certain knowledge we have from the Goſpel-hiſtory, wherein they intermix their own with that of their Maſter.

But

(*q*) P. 29, 30.

But how was it poſſible for the Prieſts and Phariſees to know thus much concerning the Apoſtles? It is, I believe, one of the oddeſt queſtions ever urged by a Philoſopher; "Could not the Prieſts and Phari-"ſees think and reaſon what part the Apoſtles "ſhould act with reſpect to the body of *Jeſus*, as "well as the Apoſtles themſelves could do?" If this ſtrange queſtion deſerves any anſwer, I ſay, *Yes*, provided the Prieſts and Phariſees had been equally conſcious of the views and ſentiments of all that paſſed in the minds of the Apoſtles. But how they ſhould have come by this conſciouſneſs, I know not: Perhaps our Philoſopher may be able to inform us. The reaſons, therefore, in the caſe of the Apoſtles, ſhewing them incapable of conceiving any deſign to ſteal away the body, being altogether unknown to the Rulers of the *Jews*, could have no influence over them to prevent their watching the ſepulchre. Nay, had they ſent abroad their ſpies and got intelligence, that there was no deſign among the Diſciples to ſtea laway the dead body; yet, ſurely, having been forewarned that *Jeſus* was to riſe again, good policy or common prudence, would have obliged them, in a matter of ſuch conſequence, to have taken this eaſy precaution of watching the ſepulchre. In ſhort, the Chriſtian argument which our Philoſopher here inſiſts upon, and which he confeſſes well ſhews the abſurdity of a fraudulent reſurrection, is this; "The Apoſtles, without the re-"ſurrection of *Jeſus*, and their having him alive a-"mong them, had no meaſures to purſue, no in-"tereſts to ſerve: And therefore, as they could not "pretend to reſtore life to the dead body, they had "no temptation, and could not be guilty of ſtealing "it away." But the *Jewiſh* reaſoning is this; "The Apoſtles, upon aſſuring the people that *Je-*

" *Jus* was riſen, without ſhewing him alive, might " carry on their former plot: And therefore, to pre- " vent their being detected, might come by night " and ſteal him away." Nor, in their ſenſe and view of things, was it poſſible for them to reaſon otherwiſe. Having therefore no knowledge, or, if the Gentleman would rather like to have it thus expreſſed, having no abſolute certainty, of the notions and ſentiments and views of the Apoſtles, and that they could pretend to nothing without being able to ſhew *Jeſus* alive; but ſuſpecting that the Diſciples might come by night and ſteal him away, and *ſay unto the people, he is riſen from the dead, ſo the laſt error ſhall be worſe than the firſt.* It was this ſuſpicion, however groundleſs in itſelf, that made the chief Prieſts and Phariſees ſollicitous to have the ſepulchre ſealed and guarded.

But, in our Philoſopher's opinion, " They had no " reaſon to be under ſuch conſternation, and there- " fore there is no ground to believe they were." People then never are afraid, or ſuſpect any thing, without reaſon! " Nay, continues he, it was ſo " little to the purpoſe, to guard againſt either a real " or fraudulent reſurrection, that they could not " poſſibly be guilty of ſo weak a conduct (*r*)." We were told a little before, that the ſepulchre was not guarded, becauſe the chief Prieſts and Phariſees would not thereby expoſe themſelves to ridicule; and here it is ſaid, they could not poſſibly be guilty of ſo weak a conduct. Does our Philoſopher then imagine, that every thing weak and ridiculous in the conduct of mankind, related by Hiſtorians, is meer forgery? This, I confeſs, would mightily diminiſh the number of our hiſtorical truths. But might not the

(*r*) P. 31.

the Rulers of the *Jews* do a weak and ridiculous thing, as well as others of mankind have done both before and after them? And pray, what is the good reaſon upon which the Gentleman aſſures the world, that, to guard the ſepulchre was ſo little to the purpoſe, and ſo weak a conduct, that the chief Prieſts and Phariſees could not poſſibly be guilty of it? Why, "the cauſe for watching the dead body was, "leſt the Diſciples ſteal him away by night, and ſay "unto the people, he is riſen again from the dead. "And, ſays our Philoſopher, what if they did, if "they had no proof for that aſſertion (*f*)." But if the Prieſts and Phariſees had no proof of the contrary, as they knew of the prediction, and had the body once in their poſſeſſion, might not this render their cauſe a little ſuſpicious? Can any man of common ſenſe (as the Gentleman ſpeaks) think it would have been little to the purpoſe, to have anſwered this aſſertion of the Apoſtles, by a public proclamation, aſſuring the world, that the body of that perſon pretended to be alive, was ſtill lying in ſpices, as the Diſciples had laid it, dead and lifeleſs in the ſepulchre, where every body had acceſs to ſee it, and which, for the general ſatisfaction, they would expoſe to the public view of all the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem?* Would not this have confounded the whole plot, ſhown the Apoſtles abandoned impudent impoſtors, and made the conduct of the Prieſts and Phariſees in watching the ſepulchre, to be univerſally applauded as wiſe and prudent? But the Gentleman goes on,

"If, ſays he, the people could never ſee *Jeſus* "afterwards, would they be ſuch credulous fools "to believe them? For ſuch they muſt be to be-

"lieve

(*f*) P. 32.

" lieve ſuch a miracle on bare report, when the e-
" vent thereof could prove itſelf." A wiſe queſtion, and a judicious reflection from our Philoſopher, and mighty conſiſtent with his opinion of the Chriſtian world! Does he not complain, that, in the days of the Apoſtles, and in all ages ſince, people have been ſuch credulous fools, and are like to continue ſo to the end of time, if his argument, which in the vanity of his heart, he will needs have to be invincible truth, puts not an end to the ſtrange deluſion? But let us a little recollect our Philoſopher's reaſoning. Does he not here openly betray his own cauſe, and ſtrongly argue for the truth of the reſurrection? No doubt, he fairly inſinuates, that, on bare report, the people could not have been ſuch credulous fools to believe it: And, as in fact it is certain, that infinite numbers did undoubtedly believe it; muſt we not from hence neceſſarily conclude, that, as to the truth and certainty of this grand event, they were otherwiſe, than on bare report, fully ſatisfied? *Magna eſt veritas.*——Be that as it will; the Gentleman next propoſes a very good reaſon, (which ſhews the abſurdity of his opinion) why in prudence the chief Prieſts and Phariſees could not fail to watch the ſepulchre.

" It looks," ſays he, " as if the opinion of the
" Scribes and Phariſees was, that the Diſciples had
" been uſed to deceive the people by reporting falſe
" miracles, and that the people had been carried a-
" way by ſuch falſe reports: Why elſe ſhould they
" be afraid they ſhould be ſo now?" But, to ſpeak out the real truth, (as our Philoſopher's argument would oblige him to go on) neither did the Apoſtles deceive the people, nor were the people led away by falſe reports. What reaſon is there then to believe, they ſealed and watched the ſepulchre? Surely,

none,

none. Why ſhould they fear? The Diſciples were honeſt men, and no ſeducers of the people. Thus, when it may promote his own views, the Gentleman can venture to vindicate the Apoſtles from deceit and impoſture. Whether it is requiſite in defence of Infidelity, I ſhall not ſay; but ſo light and unſteady, ſo inconſiſtent and reproachful a conduct, the cauſe of Chriſtianity does not require. Our way lies open before us, we can go on in an equal, uniform manner, and without ſtepping aſide into any deluſive courſe, can repreſent things as they really are. The Gentleman is pleaſed to tell us, that to this ſtory of ſealing and watching the ſepulchre we can give no credit, becauſe "It looks as if "the opinion of the Scribes and Phariſees was, that "the Diſciples had been uſed to deceive the people "by reporting falſe miracles, and that the people "had been carried away by ſuch falſe reports." And is not this the very caſe, as the ſacred hiſtory relates it? They charged *Jeſus* with caſting out devils by *Beelzebub* the prince of the devils; they called him a deceiver; and thus they reprimand their own officers, *Are ye alſo deceived? Have any of the Rulers, or of the Phariſees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law, are curſed* (*b*). And can our Philoſopher think, that the Rulers of the *Jews* had herein a better opinion of the Diſciples than they had of their Maſter? By his own reaſoning, therefore, the Prieſts and Phariſees muſt have been upon their guard, and ſet a watch on the ſepulchre. And muſt they not have been the more ſtrongly induced to take this precaution, as they well knew that one of their own party, a friend of *Jeſus*, *Joſeph* of *Arimathea*, a man of conſiderable note, had begged the body from *Pilate*,

(*b*) John vii. 47.

late, and laid it in his own tomb; whereby, in their apprehenſion, the Diſciples might have eaſy acceſs to diſpoſe of it, as their deſigns ſhould direct them? Beſides, as it ſeems to have been a common opinion among the *Jews*, that Prophets and good men might return to life again (*i*), this certainly could not but increaſe their ſollicitude about having the ſepulchre guarded, as in their ſuſpicion, the Apoſtles might come to lay hold of this popular prejudice for promoting the belief of a reſurrection; the credit of which they might hope totally to ruin by having the body in their own power. Thus, we ſtill ſee, it ſtands to reaſon to believe, that the chief Prieſts and Phariſees, as St. *Matthew* reports, ſealed and watched the ſepulchre.

" But, why all this fear of the Diſciples, who " fled and hid themſelves for fear of the *Jews*, out " of a juſt apprehenſion, that they ſhould, if appre- " hended, be ſacrificed with their Maſter (*k*)? " The Gentleman's philoſophy has certainly in it ſomething very peculiar, that can make a plain reaſon for watching the ſepulchre, a good argument againſt it. Common ſenſe ſeems to teach a man, that the Rulers of the *Jews* might indeed have come to judge it needleſs to take this precaution of watching the ſepulchre, had they had all the Diſciples of *Jeſus* in ſure cuſtody. But, becauſe they had all fled and hid themſelves, and were thereby at full liberty, under the covert of night, to execute their deſigns; therefore the chief Prieſts and Phariſees had no reaſon to fear, or to guard the ſepulchre, leſt his Diſciples come by night, and ſteal him away, and ſay unto the people, he is riſen from the dead; is a paradox to be explained by no other a method but the Gentleman's philoſophy.

The

(*i*) Mark vi. 14. Luke ix. 7. (*k*) P. 32.

The other branch of our Philoſopher's evidence againſt ſealing and watching the ſepulchre, is the caſe of the women, who are ſaid to have gone early to the ſepulchre. "It appears," ſays he, "thoſe "women were under no apprehenſion of any hin- "derance or moleſtation from the watchmen. They "conſulted together as they went, who ſhall roll us "away the ſtone from the door of the ſepulchre? "Which they would not have ſaid, if they had "known it was ſealed; nor would they have "gone to anoint the body, if they had known "there had been a watch ſet (*l*)?" All this, I confeſs, is juſtly obſerved, nor can we conceive it otherwiſe. "And (ſays the Gentleman) "if theſe things had been done, how is it poſſible "but they muſt have known them?" But how poſſible it is, they knew nothing of them, our Philoſopher might have underſtood, had he attended to their hiſtory. It would ſeem, as if they were carrying the body of *Jeſus* to be buried, the women followed after, and ſitting over againſt the ſepulchre, beheld where he was laid, and ſaw a great ſtone rolled to the door of the ſepulchre. Thus, after all was over, without hearing the leaſt whiſper concerning any deſign to ſeal the ſtone and watch the ſepulchre, they returned home, and prepared ſpices and ointments for the body. And the next day being the Sabbath, when they could not execute their pious intentions, *they reſted all that day according to the commandment.* Now, it was on this day that the chief Prieſts and Phariſees addreſſed *Pilate*, and having obtained leave from him, *went and made the ſepulchre ſure, ſealing the ſtone, and ſetting a watch.* So that upon the face of the hiſtory it is apparent, that

(*l*) P. 27.

that the women knew nothing of what was done on the Sabbath, by the chief Prieſts, at the ſepulchre.

But, ſays the Gentleman, "So public an action, "done about him, on whom all their thoughts and "affections were at that time employed, could not "be private to them (*m*)." An idle ſpeculation of a doting Philoſopher! What matter of fact, how conſiſtent ſoever with all the other parts of the hiſtory, can, at this rate, eſcape being condemned as forgery? To a Philoſopher that underſtands the nature of things, I am apt to think, the clean contrary will appear highly probable. The body had been buried without any diſturbance, it was laid in the ſepulchre of a friend, where it was ſafe, and in no danger of meeting with any rudeneſs or indignity. The women therefore having no apprehenſion of any thing of this nature, they had no temptation to be looking abroad. And, as all their thoughts and affections, as the Gentleman obſerves, were, at that time, employed about *Jeſus*, what elſe could they chuſe to do, but to keep at home, retired from the view of all mankind, privately bewailing the death of their friend, lamenting their own mournful condition, imparting their ſorrows to one another, and finding no comfort but in the proſpect of diſcharging their laſt duty in anointing the dead body? This, in my apprehenſion, a Philoſopher cannot but eſteem a natural account of their ſituation: And it ſhews them void of all correſpondence with the world, and knowing nothing of what is paſſing in public; nor am I able to conjecture, as it is conſiſtent with every other article of the hiſtory, to what objection our Philoſopher will judge it liable.

It

(*m*) P. 27.

It is true, the Gentleman ſtill inſiſts, that had the chief Prieſts and Phariſees ſealed and watched the ſepulchre, the women certainly muſt have known it: "Nothing (ſays he) could be hid from the Diſ-"ciples, for St. *Matthew* knew what the chief "Prieſts and Rulers ſaid in their Privy Council." And is this the firſt thing ſaid in a Privy Council, that ever came abroad in the world? This, however, is one of thoſe ſtrange things that ſo frequently throw our Philoſopher into fits of wonder. And, perhaps, had St. *Matthew* known the ſame moment or hour it happened, as the Gentleman would inſinuate, that the chief Prieſts gave large money to the ſoldiers, *&c.* it might have ſeemed to ſome people ſomewhat wonderful. But, as from the holding of this Privy Council, and the writing of his hiſtory, which happened ſeveral years after, St. *Matthew* had full time to inform himſelf, and eaſy acceſs to know the matter of fact; may not our Philoſopher's wonder be ſomewhat abated? And pray, what connexion can any mortal diſcern betwixt St. *Matthew*'s knowledge of things when he wrote his hiſtory, and the knowledge of the women, when the chief Prieſts ſet a watch on the ſepulchre? Were it not ſo common in the cauſe of infidelity, one might wonder how a man can come to proſtitute his philoſophy in maintaining ſuch an article. To any man therefore who conſiders things, it is apparent, that, although the chief Prieſts did moſt certainly ſeal and guard the ſepulchre, yet, the women, when they went to anoint the body of *Jeſus*, knew nothing of the matter.

But, to ſhew what dependence there is on the truth of Goſpel-hiſtory,— "St. *Luke* agrees with "the other Evangeliſts *Matthew* and *Mark*, and "informs us, that *the women alſo which came with*

" *him from* Galilee *followed after, and beheld the se-*
" *pulchre, and how the body was laid.* Therefore,
" they knew, to be ſure, that *Nicodemus* had laid it
" in ſpices. And yet St. *Luke* ſays, that theſe
" very women *returned from the ſepulchre, and pre-*
" *pared ſpices and ointments, and reſted the Sabbath-*
" *day:* And that *on the firſt day of the week, very*
" *early in the morning, they came unto the ſepulchre,*
" *bringing the ſpices they had prepared.*" Now, ſays our Philoſopher, " I cannot reconcile this with St.
" *John*'s account; for, if the body was laid in the
" ſepulchre with an hundred pound weight of ſpices
" what need had it of more, or to be done again (*n*)?"
A rare queſtion from a Philoſopher who pretends to underſtand human nature! It may, perhaps, be doubted whether the women knew of what *Nicodemus* had done: But, as it matters not whether they did or no, I wiſh the Gentleman had told the world, upon what authority he would perſuade us, that this piece of conduct in the women was altogether needleſs. He thinks himſelf that *Nicodemus* had done enough; but is he abſolutely ſure, that the women thought ſo too; or, does he pretend, that his opinion as to that matter, is the ſtandard whereby the women muſt neceſſarily have adjuſted their conduct? *Nicodemus*, in embalming the body, had only made uſe of a mixture of myrrh and aloes; but a great many other ingredients were employed upon ſuch occaſions; as in the caſe of *Aſa*, *they buried him in his own ſepulchre, and laid him in the bed, which was filled with ſweet odours, and divers kinds of ſpices prepared by the Apothecary's art*; *and they made a very great burning for him* (*o*): And might not the women have apprehended, that ſome ſuch burning, or ſome ſuch other ingredients were ſtill neceſſary?

Again,

(*n*) P. 26. (*o*) 2 Chron. xvi. 14.

Again, *Nicodemus*, in what he had done, had indeed testified his high regard for *Jesus*; but what was that to the women? They had not as yet, in such instances, expressed their esteem and tender affections; and might they not incline to relieve, in some measure, the grief they were under, and to indulge themselves in the thoughts of their having something of their own about the body of their Lord, that should declare the sincere veneration they, in particular, had for him, and how greatly they loved and honoured him? To a Philosopher who understands the affections of human minds, nothing can appear more natural. And when their history informs us, that so they intended, what is there in the nature and relations of things that can prevent our believing it? To tell us *the body had no need of more*, or *to be done again*, is an objection that must expose a Philosopher to ridicule. And what I would gladly know, are the bounds which the Gentleman pretends to set to the expressions of one's regard and tender affections towards one's departed friends, beyond which, if an Historian shall report people go, we may rest confident he reports a falsehood? In a matter so much depending on the dispositions of particular persons, and where, both by God and man, people are allowed so much latitude; how the nature and relations of things can help our Philosopher to a general rule, I have not philosophy enough to determine. Upon settling these limits, I suppose the Gentleman will condemn as forgery what is related by the *Roman* Historians: That *Otho*'s soldiers, from a mighty love of their Prince, not only wept, and kissed his hands and feet, but killed themselves by his funeral pile. And, as it was very needless, it must be equally false, that *Severus*, so long after the death of *Pertinax*, celebrated his funerals,

nerals, where *Dio*, who was preſent, tells us, there were the moſt tender expreſſions of the deepeſt concern. Nor can it be true, that the two ſons of *Severus*, after they had burned their father's body, and laid his aſhes in ſweet ſpices, having carried them to *Rome*, did there again ſolemnize his funeral rites; for what need had the body of more, and to be done again? And thus when our Philoſopher, together with every thing ridiculous, and whatever may be counted weak in the conduct of mankind, has likewiſe ſtruck out whatever may be deemed needleſs, we ſhall have left us, I am afraid, not a great deal of true hiſtory.

"But why do theſe Evangeliſts tell different "ſtories? St. *Matthew*, one about guarding and "ſealing the ſepulchre; St. *Mark* and St. *Luke*, "another, which ſhews it was neither guarded nor "ſealed; St. *John* to the ſame purpoſe, but different "from both? Who can know the truth from theſe "diſagreeing Hiſtorians? Why did not they that "followed St. *Matthew*, make his ſtory good? "Why not ſo much as mention a word of it, but "fly from that, and tell another which contradict-"ed it? Will not ſome imagine that St. *Matthew*'s "had been detected, therefore St. *Mark* and St. "*Luke* tell another; and that theirs having been "alſo confuted, St. *John* comes, and tells one differ-"ent from all the reſt? If they had not been rout-"ed out of their intrenchments, why did they "quit them, and throw up others (*p*)?" No man more reſolute than our Philoſopher, he aſſerts boldly, and keeps within no bounds in his calumny. The naked truth is this: *Matthew* indeed is the only Evangeliſt who reports, that the chief Prieſts ſealed and watched the ſepulchre. All the four re-

late,

(*p*) P. 27, 28.

late, that the women went to the ſepulchre; *John* takes no notice of their intention; the other three do; *Mark* and *Luke* inform us, that their deſign was to anoint the dead body; and *Matthew*, in more general terms, that they went to ſee or viſit the ſepulchre. And, as this is the whole of the matter, what is it, in the name of wonder, that can here intitle this Gentleman to aſſure the world, that theſe Hiſtorians diſagree, are at variance, and contradict one another? It is true, they tell us different parts of the ſame hiſtory, each man as his own choice directed him; but is not this the common privilege, the univerſal practice of all Hiſtorians whatſoever? If, indeed, theſe parts were inconſiſtent, or could not agree together, the whole might be counted forgery. But, to make out any the leaſt inconſiſtency, is beyond the power of our Philoſopher. No doubt, he roundly aſſerts, that the ſtory told by *Mark* and *Luke*, namely, that the women prepared ſpices, and went to the ſepulchre in order to anoint the body of *Jeſus*, contradicts what is reported by *Matthew*, or ſhews, that the ſepulchre was neither guarded nor ſealed. But, as I have already ſhown, that theſe two parts of the ſacred hiſtory are quite conſiſtent with one another; I ſhall here only preſume to adviſe our Philoſopher to aſſure the world, in the next edition of his book, that not only St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* diſagree in this article with St. *Matthew*, but St. *Matthew* therein contradicts himſelf moſt ſhamefully: For, having told us, *the chief Prieſts went and made the ſepulchre ſure, ſealing the ſtone, and ſetting a watch*; he immediately ſubjoins, *in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the firſt day of the week, came* Mary Magdalene *and the other* Mary, *to ſee the ſepulchre:* Not ſurely to ſurvey the curious workmanſhip, as it was a new

ſepulchre

ſepulchre hewn out of a rock, but to viſit the body of *Jeſus* that was there intombed, and, one would think, to pay their laſt reſpects to their dear Lord, in anointing his dead body. And can it be thought, the women, on any account, would have adventured to go ſo early to viſit the ſepulchre, or the body there lying, if they had known there had been a watch ſet? So that St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* do by no means fly from St. *Matthew*'s ſtory of watching the ſepulchre, and tell another which contradicts it; they tell us, that the women went early to the ſepulchre, and St. *Matthew* tells us the very ſame; which likewiſe is expreſsly related by St. *John*, who tells us no ſtory different or inconſiſtent with all the reſt. The agreement therefore of theſe Hiſtorians lies obvious to every conſiderate man. Is it not, then great pity to ſee a moral Philoſopher, by an evil ſpirit of infidelity, *routed out of his intrenchments*, the nature and relations of things, a ſacred regard to truth, and a tender concernment for other people's characters: *Why elſe does he quit them, and throw up others*, from whence he ſo daringly attacks truth, and ſhoots all the poiſoned arrows of calumny?

It comes next in our way to conſider what relates to the bribing of the ſoldiers. And upon this our Philoſopher is of opinion, that had the watch been witneſſes, as the hiſtory alledges, of what is ſaid to have paſſed at the ſepulchre upon the reſurrection of *Jeſus*, and had theſe reported thoſe things to the Rulers of the *Jews*, neither could the chief Prieſts have bribed the ſoldiers, nor could the ſoldiers have taken a bribe. So that all theſe facts muſt likewiſe be counted mere forgery.

As for the Prieſts, "They (ſays the Gentleman) "as well as the people, were credulous of miracles, "being nurſed up in the belief of them, which when "atteſted

" atteſted by their own party, perſons whoſe vera-
" city they could depend upon, as in this caſe, (not
" the flying reports of a giddy mob) muſt have pre-
" vented them from doing what it is pretended they
" did (*q*)." But how is the Gentleman ſo very ſure, that had the watch reported the things ſaid to have happened at the ſepulchre, it would have prevented the prieſts from bribing the ſoldiers? He alledges that theſe things being atteſted by their own party, perſons whoſe veracity they could depend upon, they muſt needs have believed them; " and
" the hiſtory (ſays he) ſuppoſes they did; becauſe
" they hired the watchmen to conceal the matter,
" and report what they would have believed, ra-
" ther than what they themſelves did believe (*r*)."
But, without believing the report of the ſoldiers, might not the Rulers of the *Jews* have acted the part they did, from finding thoſe ſoldiers very poſitive in their aſſertions, and that they might be apt to give the ſame account of things to the public? As it ſeems however highly probable, that the chief Prieſts and Phariſees believed the report of the ſoldiers, I will not debate this point with our Philoſopher; I would only know of him, by what rule in his logic does he pretend to conclude, that the *Jewiſh* Rulers, upon their believing this report, would never have gone about to hire the watchmen to conceal it? Has he found out any general rule that enables him to prove, againſt matter of fact, that all mankind do always act according to their belief of things; or that this conduct was moſt certainly obſerved by the chief Prieſts and Phariſees? Why, the Gentleman tells us, " if they believed *Jeſus* was
" riſen from the dead to be their King, (for
" it

(*q*) P. 35. (*r*) P. 33.

" it is evident he could not be the *Meſſiah* they ex-
" pected without being ſo) it ſeems more probable,
" inſtead of hiring men to conceal it by a falſe re-
" port, they would have liſted ſoldiers in his ſer-
" vice, and ſet up his banner at the temple gates,
" or at leſt would have ſilently and cautiouſly
" waited the event, leſt they ſhould be found guil-
" ty of fighting againſt God. For they muſt needs
" know, that a work ſo miraculous muſt be of God,
" and that therefore they could not overthrow
" it (*s*)." But alas! notwithſtanding they might believe the report of the ſoldiers, and preſume *Jeſus* was riſen from the dead; yet ſuch were their confirmed unconquerable prejudices, that, conſiſtently with thoſe, they could not poſſibly believe him to be the *Meſſiah*: So that, what our Philoſopher here eſteems more probable, has, in the nature and relations of things, no ſort of foundation. Indeed, as it was, they might have known, as *Gamaliel* and the *Jewiſh* Council came to ſuſpect afterwards (*t*), that a work ſo miraculous muſt be of God; and that therefore they could not overthrow it, but in their oppoſition muſt be found guilty of fighting againſt God. And what of all this! May not our Philoſopher's knowledge of human nature lead him to confeſs, that ſuch events naturally enough ariſe from the violence of human paſſions, which very frequently, at all hazards, muſt be gratified? Or, ſuch things being ſo enormouſly wicked, does the Gentleman rather incline to think, that human nature is incapable of ſo great a height of impiety; and chuſe rather to condemn them as mere forgery? By this means, I confeſs he would ſtill reduce the truth of hiſtory to fewer articles: But where

(*s*) P. 36. (*t*) Acts v. 34—40.

where is the Historian, whose reputation, at this rate, could be saved? Too many are the examples of this monstruous height of impiety, to which people's passions hurry them. It is said of *Augustus*, that, upon losing his fleet by a storm at sea, he cried out, *in spite of* Neptune, *he would have the victory*. Nor would he suffer the statue of that God to be carried in the solemn procession at the next *Circensian* games. Whether the passions of the chief Priests and Pharisees were under better discipline, and more moderate, it lies upon our Philosopher to explain.

But he pursues his argument, "Could the *Jewish* "Rulers (says he) so readily believe the report of "the soldiers, and so foolishly think to conceal it, "by hiring them to publish a lye (*u*)." That this report, as it came from their own party, persons whose veracity they could depend upon, could not but find credit with the *Jewish* Rulers, our Philosopher himself seems to have told us. And as for their thinking, by bribing the soldiers, "to pre-"vent that from being known, which, if true, "they had all the reason in the world to believe "could not be kept secret (*x*);" this, undoubtedly, speaking as a moral Philosopher, was very foolish; but such foolish things are frequentenough in the world, and shew us what a silly part even sage Rulers are tempted to act under the power of passion and prejudice. And yet this sort of conduct, as the world goes, must not be counted so very silly neither. Both in private and public life, among little and great politicians, nothing more common than to promote one's designs, by hanging out, as it were, false colours, by misrepresenting things, by raising and propa-

(*u*) P. 34. (*x*) Ib.

gating falſe reports, thereby meaning to prevent that from being known, which they have all the reaſon in the world to believe, ſhall not be kept ſecret. Of this the inſtances are numberleſs, and many of them very ſucceſsful. In the particular caſe now before us, we are told; *So they took the money, and did as they were taught. And this ſaying, His Diſciples came by night and ſtole him away, is commonly reported among the* Jews *until this day* (*y*). It was not indeed univerſally believed among them; for great numbers, convinced of its falſhood, became Chriſtians. It gained credit however with the bulk of the nation, who therefore ſtill adhered to their old eſtabliſhment. So that the chief Prieſts and Phariſees could not think their conduct in this article ſo very fooliſh, as our Philoſopher would ſeem to repreſent it.

After all, it is alledged, that no wonders happened at the ſepulchre, and conſequently that no attempt was made to bribe the ſoldiers. And this the Gentleman would make out after this manner: "If miracles (ſays he) can be ſuppoſed to have no "effect on human minds, why are they wrought? "Such reports are not to be credited. When ef- "fects do not correſpond, as conſequences of the "pretended cauſe, that cauſe is to be queſtioned. "Such miracles deſtroy themſelves. Wonders, "wrought in vain, reflect upon the wiſdom of the "operator, it is exerting an extraordinary power "to no purpoſe, and therefore ſhews a want of "foreſight. To ſuppoſe thoſe miracles that were "told the Prieſts and Phariſees, had no effect on "them, tho' they believed them, is to ſuppoſe, ſu- "pernatural power is too weak to work upon the "natural

(*y*) Matth. xxviii. 15.

" natural powers of man (z)." It is the real opinion of our Philosopher, that " every real miracle " is an absurdity to common sense and understand- " ing, and contrary to the attributes of God; it " is a thing utterly impossible (a)." And what pity is it that the Gentleman should have distracted his mind with other subjects, and not collected its whole strength in making out this wild assertion to the conviction of mankind? This would have been doing more, than as yet he has been able to do. In a very concise manner, with less labour to himself, and greater credit to his philosophy, he would have thereby, to the great surprise of the world, all at once totally overthrown the whole of revelation. This however he may come to perform afterwards, which surely will *confound Believers, and comfort Infidels.* Here he is pleased to suppose the possibility of a real miracle, and argues that no such events could have happened, as is reported, at the sepulchre, because they were not attended with corresponding effects. But how comes our Philosopher to take upon him to tell the world, that no corresponding effects followed those miracles? Against whom, I wonder, has he formed his argument, and to what purpose has he made it so public? Does he not thereby mean to put a stop to the genuine effect of those miracles, the miracles that were wrought by our Saviour himself, that happened at his sepulchre, and that were afterwards done by his Apostles? The Gentleman cannot but know, that those miracles produced their effects very early, that they soon spread their prevailing influence far and wide thro' the world, and that at this day a great part of mankind still continue to acknowledge their power, and confess

(z) P. 35, 36. (a) P. 52, 78.

confeſs themſelves Chriſtians. And let him remember, it is foretold, the gates of hell, all the attempts of infidelity, ſhall not be able to prevent the natural conſequences of thoſe miracles, but they ſhall always prevail, and appear conſpicuous to the world, till the laſt conſummation of all things. What then does our Philoſopher mean in telling us, "When "effects do not correſpond as conſequences of the "pretended cauſe, that cauſe is to be queſtioned. "Such miracles deſtroy themſelves." Theſe, I do aſſure him, are not the miracles of *Jeſus*.

Indeed, in the caſe of the chief Prieſts and Phariſees, neither the miracles at the ſepulchre, nor thoſe done by our Saviour when alive, were attended with their native conſequences:—And nothing more common than men's rejecting the counſel of God againſt themſelves. "But (ſays our "Philoſopher) to ſuppoſe thoſe miracles that were "told the Prieſts, had no effect on them, tho' they "believed them, is to ſuppoſe ſupernatural Power "is too weak to work upon the natural powers of "man." Here the Gentleman's philoſophy enables him to talk very oddly. No doubt, the miracles of *Jeſus* were the effects of ſupernatural power, and being offered to the world as proofs of his being the *Meſſiah*, or of his having come from God (*b*), though the Rulers of the *Jews* might believe the truth of the miracles, or the reality of the facts; yet being left to the uſe of their own faculties in apprehending the concluſion, herein, every Philoſopher will allow, they might come to miſtake widely, or to conclude in direct contradiction to the nature and relations of things; unleſs, perhaps, our Philoſopher may be able to demonſtrate, that the chief Prieſts and Phariſees were not liable to the common

(*b*) John v. 36. x. 24, 25, 38. xi. 41, 42, 43.

common weakneſſes of human nature, ignorance, inadvertency, paſſion and prejudice. It cannot therefore be ſaid, that ſupernatural power in its miraculous effects, wrought to convince mankind, that *Jeſus* had his commiſſion from heaven, is too weak to work upon the natural powers of man. Theſe miraculous effects are in themſelves full and ſtrong proofs, and to a mind attentive, free and impartial, muſt neceſſarily appear ſo; but to minds blinded and biaſſed with prejudices, ſuch as were thoſe of the *Jewiſh* Rulers, no conviction can be reached. And to force the human mind, is impoſſible. I am apt to think, the Gentleman will acknowledge, that people's belief of thoſe wonders of Almighty Power, Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs, every-where apparent in the works of Creation and Providence, and the great foundation of natural religion, is not attended with ſuitable conſequences. And, upon this, ſhould one take it in his head to contend, that thoſe wonders are nothing real, but mere deceit and illuſion, would our Philoſopher judge this argument made ſufficiently out in alledging, that to ſuppoſe thoſe wonders of Almighty Power which people ſee in the frame of the univerſe, have no effect on them, though they believe them, is to ſuppoſe Almighty Power is too weak to work upon the natural powers of man? In ſhort, our Philoſopher's doctrine in this article, would make the truth of things to depend on the paſſions of men. So that, notwithſtanding they might believe the truth of thoſe miracles that happened at the ſepulchre, the chief Prieſts and Phariſees may well be underſtood to have bribed the ſoldiers to report a lye. In this there is nothing incredible; and how credible it is that the ſoldiers took the bribe, we are next to conſider.

"If the ſoldiers (ſays the Gentleman) ſaw and

"told

" told the miracles that happened at the ſepul-
" chre, which, for the time, had ſo great an effect
" upon them, that they *became as dead men*; how
" could they take bribes to lye in ſo impudent a
" manner? They who ſaw this dreadful ſight in the
" night, or at the approach of day, muſt have
" acted like men, muſt have had ſome remaining
" terrors to reſtrain them! Surely Gentlemen of
" the red cloth have ſome honour and truth in
" them, as well as Gentlemen in black or white:
" But here, it ſeems, both agreed together to
" damn their conſcience againſt all convictions of
" ſenſe. For what? Why, to prevent that from be-
" ing known, which, if true, they had all the reaſon
" in the world to believe, could not be kept ſecret.
" And that they would by ſuch means render them-
" ſelves the objects of merited vengeance. It is
" ſtrange, unaccountably ſtrange! that thoſe ſol-
" diers, who were juſt now almoſt ſtruck dead
" with terror, ſhould loſe the impreſſions ſo eaſily
" and ſo ſoon, which it had made upon them, which
" but juſt before had ſcarce left them power to fly
" from the deadly fright that an earthquake and an
" Angel had put them in! That the ſhock it made,
" in their minds and members, ſhould diſappear
" with day-light! that for money they ſhould all
" agree together to liſt themſelves in the Prieſts
" ſervice to fight againſt God, when, by ſo doing,
" they might expect ſome heavy judgment to fall
" upon them; but by affirming the truth boldly,
" conceive reaſonable hopes of being Captains in the
" *Meſſiah*'s victorious army, which was to conquer all
" nations (*c*)." Thus far the Gentleman in defence of the ſoldiers integrity. And, no doubt, Gentlemen of the red cloth have ſome honour and truth in them, as well as the Gentlemen in black or white; only,

(*c*) P. 34.

only, if those had no more than the *Jewish* Priests had, they do not seem to have been overstocked. Once indeed among the *Romans* a bribe was a thing monstruously odious. But may not our Philosopher condescend to confess, that bribes at this time had so far lost their infamy, that soldiers, as well as all other orders of men, scrupled not to yield to the temptation, and to damn their conscience, if they had any, against all convictions of both sense and reason. It is true, that, from what happened at the sepulchre, the watch were greatly frighted: But, with what abhorrence of a lye, with what regard to truth, or with what reverence towards God, does the Gentleman's philosophy teach him, this fright must have inspired them? Along with those wonderful events there were no particular moral instructions given them; nor could they well imagine, that those things had happened on their account, to threaten them for their past villainies, and to warn them that, without their becoming wiser and better, their case was dangerous. I may venture to say, the fright they were in could be no greater than *Caligula* used to be in, when it was thunder and lightning; and let the Gentleman tell us what reformation this fright did ever work upon the Tyrant, or what piece of impiety it ever prevented his committing. Our Philosopher is quite out of character, when he cries out in a surprise, "It is strange, unaccountably strange! that, for money, they should all agree together to list themselves in the Priests service to fight against God, when, by so doing, they might expect some heavy judgment to fall upon them." Pray, what is the God they could apprehend they were to fight against, and whose heavy judgment they might therefore expect to fall upon them? As for the God of the *Jews*, they did not

not acknowledge him, they neither feared nor honoured him; and as they knew nothing of him, or utterly disclaimed him, they could expect neither good nor evil at his hands. And what concern either *Jupiter* or *Mars*, or any of their other deities, had in the matter, the Gentleman himself will determine. For my part, I am not able to understand, how the religion of the *Roman* soldiers, from what they saw at the sepulchre, could frighten them into an abhorrence of a bribe upon this occasion. *Jupiter* the Thunderer might well strike terror into *Caligula*, but, though confessed and worshipped, could not frighten him out of one instance of tyranny. Their fright therefore at the sepulchre, attended with no dread of divine vengeance, and as little moral instruction, could not prevent the soldiers from taking a bribe, and reporting a lye for it. Nor did they thereby forfeit any hopes of preferment in the *Messiah*'s army, as in the excess of his wit our Philosopher represents it: A piece of wit, however, so void of all foundation in nature, that it cannot but expose the Author to great contempt and derision. As, therefore, the history fairly insinuates, one has good reason to believe, the soldiers apprehended nothing, but that their reporting they were asleep might come to the Governor's ears, and expose them to be condemned for neglect of duty; and as to this, the chief Priests and Pharisees had promised to protect them.

But, to show the world that our Philosopher is able to put things in no disguise, that can prevent this story told by *Matthew* from appearing credible; let it be supposed, that the fright the soldiers got at the sepulchre, was attended with some religious dread, whereby their conscience might become somewhat scrupulous in the matter of a bribe. Now, what

what the Gentleman very unphilosophically alledges, with respect to the miracles of *Jesus*, none of which were in any measure discomposing to the human mind, may here fitly be applied; that such sights as the watch saw at the sepulchre, "do certainly "work more upon the passions than the reason of "men; for they wind up the one, but confound the "other." As therefore the condition of the soldiers was meer passion, and not the least hold was taken of their reason, so soon as the cause was removed, or the danger was over, and they found themselves in safety, must not the passion begin immediately to abate, and soon come totally to subside, and, together with it, the religious dread they had been under? What space of time our Philosopher will have such impressions to last, I know not; nor do I believe he has it in his power to determine. It cannot well be thought, that the soldiers were in all this deadly fright when they came before the Council. In attending to the history, one cannot but apprehend, that they had time enough to recover of their sudden fright. It does not appear that all the watch went directly to the chief Priests from the sepulchre: Only some of the watch came into the city; these repair to the house of the chief Priest, and having got access, they tell him what they had seen at the sepulchre. And, betwixt this and their offering in Council a bribe to the soldiers, as a great many things must necessarily have interveened, so a great deal of time must necessarily have passed; and, during that space of time, may not one reasonably conceive, the sudden fright the soldiers had been put in at the sepulchre, came gradually to abate, and at length to be pretty much over? Our Philosopher is certainly very inaccurate, and must very little attend to things as they really

are, when he repreſents the ſoldiers taking a bribe, almoſt the ſame moment they came frighted from the ſepulchre. But, granting that the watch, when they appeared "all of them before the Council," were not recovered of their fright, where is the improbability of their yielding to the temptation of a bribe? Or, after what manner does our Philoſopher make out an inconſiſtency betwixt their being in a deadly fright this hour, and, the danger all over, their condeſcending next hour to receive the bribe offered them? Why, our Philoſopher ſeems to think, that the fright they got had inſpired them with a ſenſe of God and religion, with a love of virtue and an abhorrence of vice; ſo that for the world they would not tell a lye, or take a bribe. If they were not Saints before, a moſt miraculous converſion! How improbable, or rather impoſſible, the nature of things, as I have before hinted, clearly demonſtrates. This, however, is the Gentleman's opinion; and it lets us ſee, that, when it may ſerve his purpoſe, he can argue, in contradiction to himſelf, upon the ſide of miracles, or upon the good influence they muſt have on human minds. But let us here likewiſe ſuppoſe, that the ſoldiers were really frighted into this fit of religion, and that they brought along with them to the Council all their pious diſpoſitions. When the chief Prieſts found the ſoldiers under ſome ſcruples of conſcience at accepting a bribe and reporting a lye, and came to underſtand that their ſcruples aroſe from what they ſaw at the ſepulchre, had they not the dexterity to perſuade them, that the apparitions they talked of, were no other but the common ghoſts and hobgoblins, mere ſpectres, at which only weak people, old women, and children were frighted? Or, was not the wit of thoſe ſage Gentlemen able

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to divert the thoughts of the soldiers, to engage them on other objects, and so far to compose their minds as to make way for their old temper and bias? Our Philosopher cannot but know, that a ready, a most effectual way to break the force of one passion, is to raise that of another. And, as the love of money is a passion that appears early in human nature, and that seems so prevalent as to be capable of engaging most men to do any thing, had not the chief Priests address enough to manage this inbred, powerful passion, to which the soldiers could be no strangers, so as to raise its force superior to any thing that can be ascribed to that new-born, pious passion, or that sudden fit of religion, with which, it is supposed, the watch had been seized? How very soon those fearful passions, however mixed with religion, that arise from uncommon, wonderful events, sometimes very alarming and dreadful, do yield to the constant, reigning passions of the human mind, is every where manifest. The *Idumeans* encamped under the walls of the town, were greatly frightened with thunder, and lightning, and other terrible prodigies; and, what is more, they apprehended that God was incensed against them for this their expedition against *Jerusalem*: And yet, no sooner were they let into the city, than, even amidst those frightful events, they committed the most outrageous cruelties (*d*). So that, to a Philosopher who understands human nature, it can never "appear strange, unaccountably "strange! that those soldiers, who were now "almost struck dead with terror, should, lose "the impressions so easily, and so soon, which "it had made upon them." And thus we see, that let the Gentleman put it in all the different lights he

(*d*) Joseph. de bell. Jud. lib. iv. cap. 4. § 5. &c.

he is capable, he ſhall never be able to prevent its appearing highly credible, that the ſoldiers, as St. *Matthew* reports, *took the money, and did as they were taught.*

Nor, how much ſoever it may ſurprize the Gentleman, is it, in any degree, incredible, that St. *Matthew* "ſhould know what the watch felt and "ſaw; (not before thoſe that went to the ſepul-"chre ſaw the watch, as our Philoſopher very fool-"iſhly inſinuates; but when he wrote his hiſtory;) "and what the Rulers did in their Privy Council "(*e*)." A Privy Council! a mean artifice in a moral Philoſopher: By what authority does he call it ſo? But, as the Gentleman, in ſpite of his morality, likes to deal in ſuch little fetches, and they are really below one's notice, I ſhall only obſerve, every body is ſenſible, there are a great many chances for things tranſacted even in a Privy Council, eſpecially after ſome time is elapſed, to come to the knowledge of the public. And, in the preſent caſe, ſuppoſing all the other Counſellors to have kept the ſecret (*f*), is it not more than probable, as they were under no oath of ſecreſy, that *Joſeph* and *Nicodemus*, who were the friends of *Jeſus*, and favoured his intereſt, advertiſed the Diſciples of all that had paſſed? Inſtead of diſcuſſing this article, our Philoſopher aſſumes the air of one in a hurry. As if quite tired of his argument, and not caring to have an anſwer, he leaves it haſtily, and, in going off, tells his Reader in a huff, very deciſive and peremptory! "If they bribed the ſoldiers to ſpread a "falſe report, and they ſpread it; no doubt, they "bribed them to keep counſel too, and they kept "it (*g*)." This, however, is the only reaſon our Philoſopher is pleaſed to afford us, in order to ſatisfy

(*e*) P. 38. (*f*) Vid. Joh. xii. 42. (*g*) P. 38.

fy us, that the secret was kept, and never came to St. *Matthew's* ears. Here then it is, *the chief Priests had taught the soldiers to be vilains*; and, having so well instructed them, *they might safely rely on their honesty*. A most powerful reason, and a mighty foundation for confidence! Whether our Philosopher is among those Prophets that are subject to dream, and sometimes to dream waking, may be a question; but one can little doubt, whether his eyes are holden, that he shall not discern either the nature of things, or the truth of history. Alas! the unhappy event at the sepulchre, that so much alarmed the chief Priests, was gone abroad before the *Jewish* Council had made it a secret. As I before hinted, it was only some of the watch that went into the city to the chief Priests; as for the rest, they seem to have gone directly to their garrison, where, from the nature of things, we must necessarily conceive they told their fright among their comrades, and after what manner it had happened. And thus the whole story being publicly known among all the *Roman* soldiers, it could not but come to spread all over the city; and should any of the watch be found talking otherwise, this language would be easy to be accounted for; nor could those lessons of honesty, taught them by the chief Priests, well prevent the soldiers themselves from explaining it. I doubt not, but as they were secured at the hands of the Governor, the large money they had received would afford them many a merry bottle, over which to laugh at the folly of the *Jewish* Rulers. I dare say, the Gentleman is of opinion, that such sort of people cannot well be thought to have employed their money to any other or better purposes: Unless, perhaps, he may imagine, that the pious dispositions they had conceived

from

from their fright, might incline them to diſpoſe of it in charitable uſes, thereby to expreſs their thankfulneſs and gratitude for their great deliverance.

Upon this article, I have only to conſider this other objection. "It is obſervable, (ſays the Gentleman) that though this ſtory of the ſealing and guarding the ſepulchre is of great conſequence, being written to prove, that the Diſciples did not ſteal the body away by night, and was a public action, it is received only on the report of a ſingle teſtimony. In other Writers, this would look like an interpolation, independent of the main hiſtory; becauſe thoſe that wrote after, are quite ſilent about it, ſo far are they from giving us any corroborating inſtances, for confirmation ſake, to confound Infidels, and comfort Believers. For, if this was as publicly done, as is pretended, it muſt have been publicly known, and could not eſcape their notice, or been unworthy their regard. Therefore, here might be a ſuſpicion of forgery in the relation, but that we are well ſatisfied of the honeſty of theſe ſacred Hiſtorians; for every thing they wrote is as true as the Goſpel (*b*)." Thus our Philoſopher retails both his reaſon and his wit. But a head whoſe only furniture is confuſed infidel notions, impoſes upon the mind, and repreſents things quite diſtorted and unnatural. So far is the ſealing and guarding the ſepulchre from looking like an interpolation, that it appears moſt manifeſtly a natural branch of the hiſtory. The chief Prieſts aſcribed the miracles of *Jeſus* to *Beelzebub*, and yet they were greatly alarmed at them; the people believed them real, and of God, and therefore they judged them curſed; they were foretold, that *Jeſus* was to riſe from the dead; and,

(*b*) P. 32.

and, upon this, apprehending that his Disciples might come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people he was risen, which they suspected would be attended with consequences more dangerous than any thing that had yet happened; to prevent this, was it not natural for them to seal and guard the sepulchre? This event therefore can be no interpolation. And how comes the Gentleman to represent it as independent of the main history, the history of the resurrection? He seems to think, it is of great consequence, as it meant to prove, that the Disciples did not steal the body away by night. And does not this give every sober man to understand, it has a natural connection with the history of the resurrection? It proves that the Disciples did not steal away the body; the body, however, was gone; the chief Priests could not shew it; what then, upon such an event, is the world led to apprehend? In a word, so far is the sealing and guarding the sepulchre from being independent of the history of the resurrection, that, I am afraid, it is the strong light it casts upon this event, that has engaged the Gentleman to prostitute his philosophy, in using so many arts to prove it a forgery. He says, indeed, it must be an interpolation, independent of the main history, because those that wrote after, are quite silent about it. And does the Gentleman really think, that the silence of after Historians can either satisfy the world, that such a particular fact mentioned by a former Historian, is an interpolation; or, in spite of their senses, convince them, it has no connection with the main history? Here, be the silence ever so profound, the connection is glaring, and shews it no interpolation. Our Philosopher pretends too, that those "who wrote after are far from giving us "any corroborating instances for confirmation sake,

"to

" to confound Infidels, and comfort Believers." As for Believers, I can assure the Gentleman, they stand in no need of comfort in what relates to the Gospel-history. And, how far Infidels are confounded, the confusion and perplexity, the distress they are visibly in, when opposing the *Christian* revelation, the buffoonry they fly to, instead of sober sense and reason, the unbecoming, the reproachful and blasphemous language they discharge with respect to persons and things, which the wisest men, the greatest Philosophers, and the laws of their country count sacred; these things, open and notorious, abundantly demonstrate. But, what is that whereof those that wrote after, have given us no corroborating instances? The Gentleman tells us, that St. *Matthew* wrote this story of the sealing and guarding the sepulchre, in order to prove, that the Disciples did not steal the body away by night. And, do the other Evangelists give us no corroborating instances confirming the same truth? Upon the face of the history in *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*, so open is this truth, and apparent, that a man must obstinately wink and shut his eyes not to see it.

But, as our Philosopher's Logic, here and elsewhere, enables him to argue from the bare circumstances of a fact's being attested only by one evidence, that that fact must be held a forgery; I shall here a little consider this principle with respect to the sealing and guarding the sepulchre, which, he bids the world observe, " is received only on the " report of a single testimony." This, perhaps, may be thought not worth while; and, indeed, the same may be said of his whole book, but in the *Christian* controversy with modern Infidels, one is sometimes obliged to explain how two and two make four. I would therefore beg leave to ask the Gentleman,

Gentleman, does the intrinſic or the real truth of facts or of human actions, depend upon ſo extraneous a thing as the teſtimony of any whatever number of witneſſes? If not, how is it poſſible to conceive, that from our having only one Hiſtorian to atteſt a fact, it follows, the fact never happened, and is a forgery? In many inſtances, people may have no more than the report of one Hiſtorian, and whilſt we have no more, ſhall we account the fact to be forged; but, when we happen to find other Hiſtorians concurring, muſt we then repute it to be real? As ſuch myſteries are beyond my comprehenſion, I ſhall only ſay, it appears to me, that our moral Philoſopher has been a little too free with St. *Matthew*'s character, and ſhewn but too great haſte to find him guilty of forgery, in reporting the ſepulchre was ſealed and guarded.

Indeed, as the truth or exiſtence of facts, that lie not within the reach of our own ſenſes, can come to our knowledge no otherwiſe, but by the teſtimony of other people; ſo, our belief as to the certainty of thoſe facts, ought to be proportioned to the degree of confidence one has reaſon to place in the reporters. But, to deny the exiſtence of a fact, or to judge it a meer forgery, purely becauſe there is only one witneſs atteſting it, how can this be counted but fooliſh and ridiculous? No doubt, the appointment is very wiſe, whereby in civil courts, the truth of a fact cannot be admitted without the teſtimony of, at leaſt, two concurring witneſſes. But, to a Philoſopher who forms his judgment of the truth of facts, upon the nature of things, what ſignifies this arbitrary inſtitution? Very frequently as a Judge, for want of legal evidence, is a man obliged to pronounce againſt the truth of a fact; while in his conſcience, as a Philoſopher, from the

nature of things, or the teſtimony of one ſingle witneſs, he has been convinced of its certainty. And, I dare ſay, the Gentleman himſelf is able to point out one or more perſons, whoſe ſingle teſtimony he would prefer before that of ſome twenty, and which he would judge ſufficient evidence to aſcertain the truth of any matter of fact whatſoever. It is not therefore the bare circumſtance of a fact's being reported only by one Hiſtorian, that can prevent a Philoſopher from confeſſing its certainty. Were it otherwiſe, I am afraid that very few hiſtorical facts, when narrowly examined, would be found able to maintain their credit. If the Gentleman will conſider the hiſtory of *Joſephus* concerning the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, he will find what a number of valuable articles in the *Roman* and *Jewiſh* hiſtory, hitherto regarded as undoubted truths, would, by his principle, all come to be condemned as forgery. Let it therefore be obſerved, that in the caſe of a ſingle witneſs, as in the caſe of a greater number, it is the circumſtances and character, the capacity and honeſty of the reporter, which, by all means, we ought carefully to conſider: And when theſe, in all other inſtances, upon a ſtrict examination, are found unexceptionable and good, what is the maxim in philoſophy that forbids us to credit his ſingle teſtimony, with reſpect to ſuch a particular fact, that happens not to be mentioned by any of his contemporaries: So that if our Philoſopher means in this article, to faſten an imputation of forgery upon St. *Matthew*, all the rules of fair dealing, the common voice of mankind, call upon him to produce other ſort of evidence, than this bare circumſtance of his being ſingle in his report, and to ſhew us, either in other inſtances, that this Evangeliſt is clearly guilty of falſhood, or, that ſuch

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is the nature of and circumſtances of the preſent article, that it cannot conſiſt with truth, but therein the reporter has evidently forfeited his veracity. This, I ſuppoſe, he will pretend he has done; but in what manner, or how ſucceſsfully, and whether he ought to renew his labour, the world will judge. Here he goes about to ſupport his charge of forgery, from St. *Matthew*'s being alone in reporting the ſealing and guarding the ſepulchre, after this manner:

"If this (ſays he) was as publicly done, as is "pretended, it muſt have been publicly known, "and could not eſcape their notice (the notice of "the other Evangeliſts) or been unworthy their "regard." And I am really glad to find, that *Mark*, and *Luke*, and *John*, have come to ſhare in our Philoſopher's good opinion. For the preſent, he conſiders them as men of judgment and honeſty, who wrote according to their knowledge and the importance of things; and therefore upon their good ſenſe and integrity he lays the weight of his charge of forgery againſt St. *Matthew*. And is it not abundantly diverting to ſee our Philoſopher, upon every proper occaſion, ſhifting the ſcene, and repreſenting things not as truth, but as paſſion directs him? The Evangeliſts are men of veracity, when their authority is ſo lucky as to help his argument forward; but, when it comes acroſs, as it moſt frequently does, they are then cheats and impoſtors. Here, as it happens, *Mark*, and *Luke*, and *John*, are men of judgment and honeſty. And let us confeſs, with our Philoſopher, that theſe Evangeliſts wrote according to their knowledge and the importance of things. But how ſhall we come to underſtand, that they wrote every thing they knew, that was not unworthy their regard? This,

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every body knows, is not the way of other Hiſtorians; and the world is appriſed, that this was not the way of the Evangeliſts. They knew undoubtly, that the chief Prieſts had ſealed and guarded the ſepulchre, and yet they take no notice of it in their hiſtory. What other reaſons they had for this ſilence, no man can determine; but it may be confidently ſaid, they judged the recording that event not neceſſary to their purpoſe. It is the Gentleman's opinion, that St. *Matthew* wrote his account of the ſealing and guarding the ſepulchre, in order to prove that the diſciples did not ſteal away the dead body. And, if there had been no other way of ſatisfying the world as to this truth, no doubt, the other Evangeliſts would have taken it. But as every article in their account concerning the reſurrection, is a demonſtration, that the diſciples neither did nor could ſteal away the body of *Jeſus*, they ſeem to have had no occaſion to relate that particular event. Beſides, that in their hiſtory they do not ſeem to have had preciſely the ſame view with the Evangeliſt *Matthew*; who, one has reaſon to think, wrote for the information of the *Jews* in particular, and to reconcile them to the character of *Jeſus*. This appears from ſeveral paſſages in St. *Matthew*'s hiſtory; I ſhall mention theſe three.

The other Evangeliſts do indeed obſerve, that the high Prieſt put this queſtion to *Jeſus*, *Art thou the Chriſt, the ſon of the bleſſed* (*k*)? But St. *Matthew* obſerves further, that the high Prieſt propounded his queſtion in a very awful and ſolemn manner, and with the utmoſt earneſtneſs, *I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Chriſt, the Son of God* (*l*)? Now hereby St. *Matthew* gives the *Jews* to underſtand, that ſo far were

(*k*) Mark xiv. 61. (*l*) Matth. xxvi. 63. Vid. Joh. x. 24.

were their chief Prieſts and Rulers from being quite ſatisfied, and at full eaſe in their conſcience, that *Jeſus* was a malefactor, as they pretended, or a cheat and impoſtor, that they were mightily perplexed as to his real character, and were under the greateſt doubts and miſgivings of mind, having no certainty but he might be their *Meſſiah*. For what elſe, in common ſenſe, can one underſtand from this adjuration made to *Jeſus*, with ſuch deep concern and ſo much ſolemnity? Surely he that made it was extremely anxious, and inwardly alarmed with ſuſpicions and jealouſies.——Again, St. *Matthew* relates this very remarkable paſſage: *Then* Judas *which had betrayed him, when he ſaw that he was condemned, repented himſelf, and brought again the thirty pieces of ſilver to the chief prieſts and elders, ſaying, I have ſinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they ſaid, what is that to us? ſee thou to that. And he caſt down the pieces of ſilver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himſelf*, &c. (*m*). Thus the *Jews* have it openly told them, that their chief Prieſts had a very uncommon and alarming confeſſion made before them, loudly declaring the innocency of *Jeſus*. The very perſon, who, tempted with a bribe, had betrayed *Jeſus* into their hands, who had lived in intimacy with him, who knew the truth of his miracles, the juſtneſs of his pretenſions, and the uprightneſs of his deſigns; this very perſon, ſtruck with a piercing remorſe of conſcience, in great agony comes to the chief Prieſts and elders, confeſſes he had betrayed innocent blood, abhors the reward of his treachery, caſts it down in the temple, and, not able to bear the ſtings of his guilty ſoul, went off, and put an end to his preſent wretchedneſs. This is a teſtimony ſealed

(*m*) Matth. xxvii. 3—10.

ſealed after a fearful manner. So that, in the violence of his death, *Judas* gave a ſtrong proof of the conviction of his guilt, and of the innocence of *Jeſus*. And, however, in defiance to humanity and juſtice, the chief Prieſts were abſolutely regardleſs of this unhappy man's condition, and of the innocence of *Jeſus*; yet, to preſerve the memory of this proof, led by the hand of Providence, they erected, as it were, a laſting monument: *With the price of the blood of* Jeſus, the bribe which *Judas* had received, and which in ſad deſpair he had thrown back again, *they purchaſed the Potters field to bury ſtrangers in. Wherefore*, ſays St. *Matthew*, *that field was called the field of blood unto this day.* And herein, the *Jews* are likewiſe told, one of their own propheſies is exactly fulfilled.——The other paſſage I mention, is this we are now explaining, wherein St. *Matthew* informs the *Jews*, that, upon recollecting that *Jeſus* ſaid, while he was yet alive, *After three days I will riſe again*, their chief Prieſts, by an addreſs to *Pilate*, having obtained a guard, *did ſeal and guard the ſepulchre, leſt his Diſciples come by night and ſteal him away*; and that the watch having fled becauſe of an earthquake, and an Angel that came and rolled back the ſtone from the door, they bribed the ſoldiers to diſſemble the matter, and to report to the world, that his Diſciples had come by night, and ſtole him away while they ſlept. And thus the *Jews* are plainly told, that their Rulers uſed all neceſſary precautions to prevent a fraud; but not being able to guard againſt any thing elſe, when thoſe wonders happened at the ſepulchre, they went about to conceal the truth, and to ſtifle that evidence, which, coming abroad, might induce mankind ſtrongly to ſuſpect a reſurrection.

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Here therefore, the ſuſpicion and jealouſy, the great perplexity the chief Prieſts were under, as to the real character of *Jeſus*; the alarming penitent confeſſion of *Judas* in their preſence, loudly proclaiming the innocence of *Jeſus*; their purchaſing a field with the thirty pieces of ſilver, the price of the blood of *Jeſus*, wherein one of their own propheſies was fulfilled; and their bribing the ſoldiers to report a falſhood, and to ſuppreſs thoſe wonders that happened at the ſepulchre, which, made public, could not but be regarded as a prelude of the reſurrection of *Jeſus*; all theſe particulars, as they peculiarly belong to the *Jews*, ſo they ſeem to have a natural tendency to reconcile them to the character and cauſe of *Jeſus*, at leaſt to awaken them to a ſerious inquiry into the truth and certainty of things. And we ſee that the facts which St. *Matthew* chuſes to relate, are not the deeds of mean and obſcure perſons, not known in the world, or where to be found, ſhould one incline to have information from themſelves; but they are the deeds of public characters, of the chief Prieſts and Elders, the Rulers of the *Jews* acting in Council, openly and in the face of the world. Nor do the place and time of the publication of thoſe facts favour an impoſture. They were publiſhed at *Jeruſalem*, where the whole was tranſacted, and while moſt of the actors, and vaſt numbers of the witneſſes muſt have been alive, able to ſatisfy mankind as to their truth and reality; circumſtances, in which hardly a fool or a madman would attempt to impoſe upon the world.

Now, as from theſe paſſages, among others, it ſeems manifeſt, that St. *Matthew*, in compoſing his hiſtory, had it in his view to inform the *Jews* in particular, and to reconcile them to the character of *Jeſus*; ſo the other Evangeliſts having no ſuch particular

particular design, it can be no matter of wonder to find in him several passages, which they take no notice of. And to alledge, that such particular articles in any Historian, are forged, because other Historians are silent about them, is so senseless and extravagant a rule of judging of the truth of history, that thereby all Historians may be brought mutually to ruin each other's reputation. Thus, therefore, St. *Matthew*'s being single in the article of the sealing and guarding the sepulchre, can be no objection to the truth of it: Nor can the silence of the other Evangelists render it in any degree suspicious.

I come now, with the Gentleman, to *the third period of time*, where he considers and compares the testimony of the four Evangelists, and the other New Testament Writers, concerning the appearances of *Jesus*, after he is said to be risen. And as ideas, when compounded, are generally perplexed, he therefore distinguishes the accounts of these Historians into separate articles. And upon these I join issue with him.

But, *first*, in general; as in every matter of fact, wherein several Historians are concerned, there are two things to be considered, namely, the fact itself, and then the circumstances with which that fact is said to be attended, I would gladly be informed, whether, supposing those Historians to agree in their testimony as to the fact itself, yet if they differ in their account of the circumstances, their evidence must totally be rejected, and the main fact, as to the truth of which they concur, be counted a forgery? For my part, I incline to think, that in all such cases it ought duly to be regarded, whether in their account of the circumstances, those Historians do really disagree, or clash and interfere with one another, or whether they report only different circumstances,

cumstances, which may all very well consist and agree together. In the former case, (which is far from being that of the Gospel-history) where the circumstances are contradictory the one to the other; if those circumstances are of such a nature as to make, as it were, a part of the main action, these contradictory accounts may, no doubt, discredit the whole evidence. But if the circumstances are only such, that the main action has no dependence upon them, I am not able to conceive upon what principles of reason, contradictory accounts, as to such circumstances, can invalidate the testimony of Historians with respect to the truth of the main event, wherein they plainly agree. In their accounts of the death of *Augustus*, Historians contradict one another as to the circumstances of *Tiberius* being present; and yet no body, for this reason, calls in question the testimony of those Historians, when they all agree in reporting, that this Emperor died at *Nola*. As for the other case, (which is that of the Gospel-history) where the circumstances are only different, and may very well consist and agree together: As every action or event is attended with various circumstances, and every Historian is at liberty to report whichsoever of those circumstances he may judge fitting; how can one but think it the absurdest thing in nature, to reject the evidence of different Historians, all concurring as to the truth of a particular fact, merely because in their accounts of the circumstances attending that main fact, they happen to differ or vary, without at all interfering with one another? As I just now observed, even plain contradictions in the circumstances of a fact are no ground for a charge of forgery against Historians, and far less can these Historians be liable to such a charge, who relate indeed different circumstances,

but all consistent and agreeing together. This, I say, is the case of the Gospel-historians; and whether our Philosopher has any thing else to object to their evidence, with respect to the appearances of *Jesus*, I now proceed to examine.

The *first* article he takes notice of, is that of the appearance of *Jesus* to *Mary Magdalene*. And, upon this, the Gentleman tells us, "the witnesses do "not agree whether *Jesus* appeared to one woman "only, or to two. Whether it was in their way, "as they were going to tell the Disciples, or at "the sepulchre, after the Disciples had been told "what had been there discovered. Whether *Jesus* "was held by the feet, or whether he would not "suffer himself to be touched. Whether he sent "word to his Disciples, that he was going to *Ga*-"*lilee*, or going to heaven (*n*)." But, as it is confessed, that three of those witnesses, namely, *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *John*, do agree, that *Jesus* did appear to *Mary Magdalene*, what is it that can discredit this testimony in this particular? Why, they agree in no other circumstance. Very well. If our Philosopher, by their not agreeing, here means, that each of those witnesses takes notice of some circumstances relating to this event, that are not mentioned by the others; this is a truth that has been known to the world ever since the publication of their histories. But if he thereby means, that in the evidence they severally offer to the world concerning this appearance, they clash and contradict one another, this is a falshood too gross to be imposed upon any of mankind, by any Philosopher whatsoever.

We are told, not only by *Matthew*, but by *Mark* and *Luke*, that, along with *Mary Magdalene*, other women went to the sepulchre early in the morning

(*n*) P. 40.

morning of the resurrection. And, as for *Mary Magdalene*'s being always named first, one may reasonably conclude, that she was the principal person; so regarding her in this light, it cannot but be allowed, that the appearance of *Jesus* to the women, may, with great propriety, be called his appearance to *Mary Magdalene*. Here, therefore, understanding this appearance of *Jesus* to *Mary Magdalene* as a particular event by itself, I hope, different Historians, without exposing themselves to the charge of forgery, may have leave to mention, in their account of this event, what particular circumstances they shall judge most proper. Thus *Mark*, while he tells us that *Jesus* appeared to *Mary Magdalene*, takes notice only of this one circumstance, it was his first appearance. This same circumstance, tho' not expressly mentioned, is easily collected from *John*; who, besides that, relates several other circumstances. And *Matthew* not only represents this appearance of *Jesus* as the first, and mentions some circumstances related by *John*; but he likewise observes, that when *Jesus* appeared to *Mary Magdalene* the other *Mary* was with her; so that, instead of saying *Jesus* appeared to *Mary Magdalene*, he says Jesus *appeared to the women*. What then can our Philosopher mean, when he tells us, "The witnesses do not agree whether *Jesus* appeared to one "woman only, or to two?" Does he mean, that, in this article, the evidence is contradictory; one witness affirming that *Jesus* appeared to *Mary Magdalene* and the other *Mary*, and the other witness declaring, that he appeared not to the other *Mary*, but to *Mary Magdalene* alone? If he has here found such an inconsistency, or any thing like it, his philosophy carries him beyond the common sense of mankind. Certain it is, that different circumstances

ſtances relating to the ſame event, all conſiſtent together, mentioned by different Hiſtorians, can never expoſe thoſe Hiſtorians as claſhing with one another, and thereby blaſting each other's credit. We learn from *Suetonius*, that *Anthony* offered a royal crown to *Julius Cæſar*. *Dio* takes notice of the ſame event; but he tells us, that *Anthony* was therein joined by his *Sacerdotal Colleagues*. Now, ſhall we here cry out with our Philoſopher, The ſtory is wrong; it cannot be credited; here is plain forgery; "the witneſſes do not agree, whether this offer was "made by one man only, or by many?" Nothing can be more ridiculous!

But our Philoſopher will not only have the Goſpel-hiſtorians to diſcredit one another, while they ſeverally relate different circumſtances of the ſame event; but he muſt needs have St. *Luke* to contradict them all as to the event itſelf." "St. "*Luke*, (ſays the Gentleman) who gives a par-"ticular account of the women, and what paſ-"ſed between them and the Angels, ſays (*ver.* "23.) that his body they found not; but, if they "had ſeen him alive or dead, they muſt have found "or ſeen his body; therefore, according to St. "*Luke*, they ſaw him not (*o*)." St. *Luke*, indeed, does not mention the appearance of *Jeſus* to *Mary Magdalene* or the women; but he by no means ſays or even inſinuates the contrary, or that he never did appear to them. In his ſtory of the two Diſciples going to *Emmaus*, he tells us of an article of their converſation, that the women *found not the body, but ſaw a viſion of Angels, which ſaid that* Jeſus *was alive*. It is this our Philoſopher lays hold of as a contradictory evidence given by St. *Luke*.

But

(*o*) P. 41.

But may not this Gentleman bear to be told, that in his concluſion his infidelity ſeems to have out-run his philoſophy? *they found not his body.*——In common language, in all propriety of ſpeech, this can only ſignify, they found not his lifeleſs body as it was taken down from the croſs, ſtill lying dead in the ſepulchre; this body was gone, not to be found, and the ſepulchre empty. "But, (ſays our Philoſopher) "had they ſeen him alive or dead, they muſt "have found or ſeen his body." Quibbling, at any rate, is contemptible, and what name it deſerves to bear, when employed in an argument ſo ſerious and important, the Reader will determine. This Gentleman has certainly as much philoſophy as enables him to diſtinguiſh betwixt a perſon and a corps, and what is the different language that is proper to expreſs theſe different ideas. I ſhall only ſay, that underſtanding this phraſe, *they found not his body*, as common language muſt determine it, it is impoſſible that any philoſophy whatſoever can here conclude, that the women their not finding the dead body of *Jeſus*, as we are told in *Luke*, bears a contradiction to their ſeeing him alive, as is reported by *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *John*. On the contrary, theſe two events are ſo very conſiſtent, or ſo well connected together, that the former is a ſtrong preſumption of the latter, or they plainly infer one another. And I ſtrongly incline to think, that the two Diſciples had heard what the women had ſaid concerning their having ſeen *Jeſus* alive. For otherwiſe, when they came to obſerve, that upon the report of the women, certain of their number went to the ſepulchre, and found it even ſo as the women had ſaid, that the body was gone and not to be found in the ſepulchre, why do they immediately add, *but him they ſaw not?* One ſhould think that the adverſative particle

particle *but*, does in this particular fairly contradiſtinguiſh the men from the women; letting us know that the women had ſeen *Jeſus*, but the men ſaw him not. And as for the two Diſciples, their taking no notice of this article in the report of the women to the Apoſtles of what had paſſed at the ſepulchre; as they believed their account of the appearance of *Jeſus*, as little as they did that of the appearance of Angels, but took all they ſaid to be pure imagination, might they not therefore very naturally, without diſtinguiſhing the different events, throw the whole under one head, and ſay in general, "the women, when they found not his body, "came ſaying, that *they had alſo ſeen a viſion of* "*Angels*, which ſaid that he was alive?" Our Philoſopher indeed makes a ſtrange uſe of it; but certain it is, that in relating a ſtory people do not always mention every fact or every circumſtance that happens; this is farther obvious in this paſſage of *Luke* now before us: The women acquaint the Diſciples of what they had diſcovered at the ſepulchre. *Then*, (*ſays* Luke) *aroſe* Peter, *and ran unto the ſepulchre, and ſtooping down, he beheld the linen cloaths laid by themſelves, and departed, wondering in himſelf at that which was come to paſs.* Here we are informed of none that went to the ſepulchre but *Peter*: And yet, at the ſame time, *Luke* very well knew that *Peter* went not thither alone. For, as he reports the ſtory of the two Diſciples, they repreſent more than one going to the ſepulchre; *And certain* (*ſay they*) *of them which were with us, went to the ſepulchre, and found it even ſo as the women had ſaid, but him they ſaw not.* And, as it thus evidently appears, that St. *Luke*'s only mentioning *Peter* as going to the ſepulchre, is far from being a proof of his not knowing of any one that accompanied him; ſo the

the two Diſciples, their only mentioning that the women found not the body of *Jeſus*, can as little be brought in proof of their not knowing, or having heard, that the women ſaid, they had ſeen *Jeſus*. And, after the ſame manner, I may here obſerve, no moral Philoſopher can juſtly alledge, in the caſe of *Mark* and *John*, that they knew nothing of the other *Mary*'s having ſeen *Jeſus*, becauſe they mention no other women but *Mary Magdalene*, to whom he appeared. The Gentleman allows, when *Peter* went to the ſepulchre, *that peradventure* John *went likewiſe*; though *Luke* mentions *Peter* only: And, for the ſake of being conſiſtent and uniform, might he not likewiſe have allowed, when *Mary Magdalene* ſaw *Jeſus*, that peradventure the other *Mary* ſaw him alſo; though *Mark* and *John* mention *Mary Magdalene* only? But, without regarding the things themſelves, our Philoſopher muſt diſſemble or confeſs them, as may beſt anſwer his purpoſe. Thus *John*'s being at the ſepulchre, helps to prove, as he manages it, that there was there no appearance of Angels; and conſequently, that, as he intends it ſhould be, the Evangeliſts contradict one another: But to confeſs, that the other *Mary* ſaw *Jeſus*, this would hurt his upright deſign of finding out contradictions in the Goſpel-hiſtory. The world is left to judge, how far ſuch conduct ſuits the character of a moral Philoſopher.

Thus it appears, that, by no one rule of his profeſſion, is our Philoſopher ſupported in concluding, that, in this article of the women's ſeeing *Jeſus*, *Luke*'s evidence is contradictory to that of *Matthew*, *Mark* and *John*. Indeed, the Gentleman is pleaſed to alledge, that the meaning he has affixed to this paſſage of *Luke*, is confirmed by the account we have concerning *Peter* and *John*, *viz.* their not ſeeing *Jeſus*

ſus at the ſepulchre; but how their not ſeeing *Jeſus* at the ſepulchre, can be a confirmation of the women's not having there ſeen him, is beyond my comprehenſion. Is it poſſible, that our Philoſopher can argue at this rate, *Jeſus* did not appear to *Peter* and *John* at the ſepulchre; and therefore, neither did he there appear to the women who ſtaid after them?

But, underſtanding this paſſage of St. *Luke*, *they found not his body*, as the Gentleman would have it, *they found not his body dead nor alive*; what good reaſon has he to be ſo poſitive, that this is evidence contradictory to that of *Matthew*, *Mark* and *John*? When Hiſtorians, not pretending to write a diary, or a minute account of every particular event, in the order of time it happens, with all its ſeveral circumſtances, do only give us a brief ſummary of things, without regarding the order of time, but throwing things of like nature together; as in this caſe, if we go about to ſettle the order or ſucceſſion and other circumſtances of things, (and very frequently, they are not to be underſtood or diſtinguiſhed) it is impoſſible preciſely to determine them, without either conſidering the nature and circumſtances of things, or comparing different parts of the ſame Hiſtorian, or different Hiſtorians who mention or write upon the ſame ſubject; ſo, if our Philoſopher will permit us to uſe the liberty which all mankind take in explaining the truth of hiſtory, I am apt to think, if we compare the different Hiſtorians together, in relation to this article, we ſhall find good reaſon to pronounce, there is here no contradictory evidence.

The Gentleman himſelf obſerves, that *John* has told the world, that *Mary Magdalene*, or, as I have above explained this article, the women, were twice at the ſepulchre. At their firſt viſit, we are informed,

formed, they neither ſaw *Jeſus* nor his dead body: But when they were there a ſecond time, *Jeſus* appeared to them. When therefore St. *Luke* relates, that *they found not his body*, underſtanding it to ſignify, they ſaw not *Jeſus* himſelf; every impartial man will allow, that this paſſage plainly points at what happened at the firſt viſit the women made to the ſepulchre. I confeſs, our Philoſopher may alledge, that this viſit, as mentioned by St. *John*, was attended by no viſion of Angels; whereas in this mentioned by St. *Luke*, there was a viſion of Angels, a circumſtance which refers it, according to *Matthew* and *John*, to that viſit wherein they ſaw *Jeſus*. But, in his account of what happened at the firſt viſit, does St. *John* inſinuate any the leaſt thing that can infer, there was at that time no appearance of Angels? And, can his bare ſilence, as to this article, be held, at any rate, to ſignify a denial of it? It is upon this abſurd, extravagant opinion, p culiar to himſelf, that our Philoſopher's objections againſt the truth of the Goſpel-hiſtory are grounded. And, indeed, the opinion is ſo evidently abſurd, that nothing more evident can be propoſed, whereby to ſhew its abſurdity: It blaſts the credit of all Hiſtorians. *Tacitus* reports, that *Domitian* was along with his uncle *Sabinus* in the capitol, when *Vitellius*'s men laid ſiege to it. Of this circumſtance, *Suetonius* takes no notice. Muſt we therefore ſay, "Here "is evidence contradictory to *Tacitus?*" At this rate, *Suetonius* not only contradicts *Tacitus*, but he proves contradictory to himſelf; for this circumſtance he particularly mentions in his life of *Domitian*. After the ſame manner, *Matthew* and *Luke* having related, that they rolled a ſtone to the door of the ſepulchre of our Lord; *Luke* and *John*, as they neglect this circumſtance, muſt be underſtood

to contradict it: And not only so, but to contradict themselves; for, in their account of the women's going to the sepulchre, they seem, each of them, fairly to insinuate, that a stone was laid at the mouth of it. However, therefore, our Philosopher may be affected towards this doctrine, I cannot doubt, but all mankind will allow, that the bare omission of such a particular fact or circumstance by one Historian, can never be held contradictory evidence with respect to that fact or circumstance, when related by another Historian. So that, as St. *John*'s taking no notice of the women's having seen a vision of Angels, at their first visit to the sepulchre, can never be understood as a denial of such a vision; so if we here understand, that when the two Disciples going to *Emmaus*, as St. *Luke* reports it, do tell us, that the women *found not the body of* Jesus, their meaning is, they saw neither the dead body nor the living person of *Jesus*; in this case, nothing can hinder us from resting confident, that the vision these two Disciples speak of happened to the women at their first visit to the sepulchre. And, indeed, as these Disciples designed a journey to *Emmaus*, it may be thought very possible, that they had left the other Disciples, before the women had come back the second time from the sepulchre, and must therefore have as yet heard nothing as to the appearance of *Jesus* to *Mary Magdalene*. Thus again, our Philosopher may be satisfied, he has no authority from St. *Luke* to conclude, in opposition to the other Evangelists, that the women saw not *Jesus*.

The Gentleman next objects, that the witnesses contradict each other, as to the place and time of this appearance of *Jesus*: They do not, says he, agree, "whether it was in their way, as they were "going to tell the Disciples, or at the sepulchre, "after

" after the Disciples had been told what had been " there discovered." As to the place, St. *Matthew* relates, that, *as the women went to tell his Disciples, behold*, Jesus *met them*: And, according to St. *John*, *Mary Magdalene* having stooped down into the sepulchre, and there spoke with Angels, ἐστράφη εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω, she was turned in her way back, and saw *Jesus* standing. This, the Gentleman rightly conceives, happened at the sepulchre: But would alledge, from St. *Matthew*, that it happened after the women had left the sepulchre, and were on their way to the Disciples. Indeed, I know not whether our Philosopher has any *data*, upon which his Geometry may enable him to determine, how far the women were advanced in their way, at which distance they cannot, in common language, be said to be at the sepulchre. But, I am pretty certain, he never will be able to shew the contrary, if it shall be asserted, that the women might have been two, or three, or half a dozen steps, or not without the walls of the garden, where the sepulchre was, when *Jesus* appeared to them. And, in any of these cases, will not common language suffer us to say, *Jesus* appeared to the women at the sepulchre? When therefore St. *Matthew* tells us, that *the women departed quickly from the sepulchre, and as they went to tell his Disciples*, Jesus *met them*; can our Philosopher shew us, that before this happened, they had made more than one step in their way, or were farther advanced than just turning about for that purpose, or, if he pleases, had run beyond the walls of the garden? But let the Gentleman, by his phrase, *at the sepulchre*, mean what he will, how comes he to represent *Matthew* and *John* contradicting one another upon this article? *Matthew* reports, that the women saw *Jesus* as they were going to his Disciples;

ples; and *John* tells us, that they saw *Jesus* (as they were returning, or) as they had turned in their way back. Our Philosopher must be extremely envious of the character of the sacred Historians, when he goes about to attack their credit, so much at the expence of his own. I wonder how the world would regard that man, who should pretend to discredit *Tacitus* and *Suetonius* by such wise observations, *Tacitus* relates, that some soldiers dispatched themselves *hard by Otho*'s funeral pile; but *Suetonius* says, this happened *not far* from the pile!

With the same degree of good sense does the Gentleman object to the time of this appearance of *Jesus*. St. *Matthew* indeed says, that, as the women were going to the Disciples, to deliver the message they had received from the Angel, *Jesus* appeared to them; and this, he would have us believe, is contradictory to St. *John*'s account, from whom we learn, that after the women had been with the Disciples, and had informed them of what they had discovered at the sepulchre, and had again returned to the sepulchre, *Jesus* appeared to them. Thus, according to *John*, the women were twice at the sepulchre. At their first visit, they found not the body of *Jesus*, and they came and told it to the Disciples: But, returning again to the sepulchre, at this second visit, they saw *Jesus*. Now, as *Matthew* takes no notice of this circumstance of the women's having been twice at the sepulchre, but, having brought them to the sepulchre, represents them to have seen *Jesus* before they left it: What is there in any one of the rules of fair dealing or judging impartially, that can hinder us from determining, that *Matthew* here relates what happened at the second visit the women made to the sepulchre? To find out one single word in *John*'s relation of this second visit,

visit, contradictory to that of *Matthew*, is not in the power of our Philosopher. But, as the difficulty, I may say, the impossibility, of settling, in most instances, the precise order and succession of events or circumstances, as they actually happened, leaves people at great liberty (without hurting the truth of the things themselves) in apprehending their series and connection; if one should rather chuse to take this passage of St. *Matthew* in another light, one may well affirm, that this Evangelist here mixes together what passed at those two visits the women made to the sepulchre, without distinguishing the one from the other, and represents the whole as transacted at the same time. And, taking it in this view; if we compare with it the account we have from St. *John*, who makes each of those visits a distinct, separate article, and expressly declares, that *Jesus* appeared to the women at their second visit; it must be conceived, that what St. *Matthew* relates from ver. 9. happened at the second visit, and what goes before, at the first. It is true, our Philosopher may here object, that St. *Matthew* connects all the parts of his story so very straitly, that one can suspect no interruption in the succession of those different events: The Angel's charge to the women to go tell his Disciples, that *Jesus* is risen: The women run to bring his Disciples word: And, as they went to tell his Disciples, behold, *Jesus* met them. Here, I say, the appearance of an uninterrupted succession of events is very strong. But, I am apt to think, that no man that understands history, or attends to the manner of connecting events used by Historians, will take upon him immediately to declare, that betwixt the women's being in their way, in obedience to the Angel, to tell the Disciples, that *Jesus* was risen, and their seeing *Jesus* himself, there were no intervening

intervening events; for St. *Matthew* mentions none. But, if other events did actually intervene, such as their delivering their message to the Disciples, and their returning again to the sepulchre, does not St. *Matthew*, by his way of representing things, directly lead us into a mistake, or to form a wrong judgment as to the order and succession of events? No; St. *Matthew* writes his history, as other Historians do theirs. It is our own ignorance or want of attention, it is our being over rash or hasty in our conclusions, that betrays us. *Xiphilinus* tells us, that *Otho* having prevailed with his friends to leave him, and provide for their own safety, he withdrew into his chamber, and there run himself through with a dagger. Thus, we know of no event that intervened between *Otho*'s retiring into his chamber, and his dispatching himself; but the one seems here to have immediately succeeded to the other. We learn, however, from *Suetonius*, that a good many events intervened, and some of them of such a nature, as made *Otho* delay dispatching himself till next morning. *Tacitus* too takes notice of several intermediate events, and particularly insinuates, what is not mentioned by *Suetonius*, that *Otho* did not dispatch himself, till he had returned to his apartment a second time. Thus, we see how very rash it would be in any man, positively to determine, that no particular facts, or only such particular facts, did intervene between two such events. *Xiphilinus* mentions none. But *Tacitus* relates several, and particularly insinuates, that *Otho* did not make himself away, at his first withdrawing into his chamber, but after he had returned to it a second time. Whereas *Suetonius* so connects the parts of his story, as to lead us to apprehend, that *Otho* dispatched himself, at his first withdrawing. Just after the

same

ſame manner, St. *John* informs us, that the women did not ſee *Jeſus* at their firſt viſit to the ſepulchre, but after they had returned to it a ſecond time. Whereas St. *Matthew*, neglecting ſome intermediate events, ſo connects the parts of his ſtory, as we are led to apprehend (without any the leaſt prejudice to the main hiſtory) that the women ſaw *Jeſus*, at their firſt viſit to the ſepulchre. And, if this different manner of connecting events, obſerved by *Xiphilinus* or *Dio*, by *Tacitus* and *Suetonius*, does, in no degree, invalidate the credit of theſe Hiſtorians univerſally regarded; I would fain hope, that the character of the Evangelical Writers, can as little ſuffer, upon their taking the ſame liberty. As we claim nothing in behalf of the Authors of the New Teſtament, but what is univerſally allowed to every other Hiſtorian, it ſeems ſcandalouſly partial in our Philoſopher, to deny them the common rights of mankind.

It is next objected, "The witneſſes do not agree, "whether *Jeſus* was held by the feet, or whether "he would not ſuffer himſelf to be touched. For, "St. *Matthew* ſays, the *Marys* held *Jeſus* by the "feet: Whereas, St. *John* ſays, *Jeſus* forbad *Mary* "to touch him." But this objection is founded upon our Philoſopher's impoſing a particular meaning upon words, as it may ſerve his purpoſe. No doubt, the word ἅπτεσθαι, ſometimes ſignifies barely to *touch*, as it is underſtood, *Matth.* xiv. 36. *That they might only touch the hem of his garment.* But, moſt frequently, it ſignifies ſome inward affections or diſpoſitions of the mind, with the correſponding, external actions of the body. And thoſe affections with their correſpondent actions, are ſometimes malicious and hoſtile, and ſometimes friendly and beneficent. Thus, *Zech.* ii. 8. *He that* toucheth *you*, toucheth *the apple of his eye: i. e.* He that exerts any malicious

ous paſſions to your prejudice, hurts the apple of his eye. And *Mark* x. 13. *And they brought young children to him, that he ſhould* touch *them: i. e.* That with tender affections he ſhould embrace and bleſs them. Accordingly, Jeſus *took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and bleſſed them.* Thus likewiſe, the woman, mentioned by St. *Luke*, vii. 38, 39. *Her waſhing* Jeſus's *feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head, her kiſſing them, and anointing them*; all theſe expreſſions of tender affections and deep reverence towards *Jeſus*, the Phariſee, with whom our Lord was eating, comprehends under the word ἅπτεσθαι *to touch*: *This man*, ſays he within himſelf, *if he were a Prophet, would have known, who and what manner of woman this is that* toucheth *him*; *i. e.* who is thus careſſing him Now, in this laſt ſenſe, is the phraſe, μή μου ἅπτου, *touch me not*, to be underſtood. So that the meaning is, *Embrace me not with all this fondneſs and tenderneſs; for I am not yet aſcended to my Father, and you ſhall have other opportunities of thus expreſſing your regard towards me.* As therefore *Matthew* repreſents to us the manner in which the women were exerting their kind affections towards *Jeſus*, *holding him by the feet, and worſhipping him*; ſo *John* only informs us, that *Jeſus* was pleaſed to check them in the height of their joy and tenderneſs, while they were thus embracing his feet; chuſing rather to haſten them away to acquaint his Diſciples of his reſurrection. And, had the Gentleman's ſcheme ſuffered him to underſtand this word, ἅπτεσθαι, as it is commonly underſtood by the beſt *Greek* Authors, he would have eſteemed this objection no great credit to his philoſophy.

Nor is his *fourth* objection leſs trifling or frivolous. He tells us, "The witneſſes do not agree,

"whether

" whether *Jesus* sent word to his Disciples, that he " was going to *Galilee*, or going to heaven. For " St. *Matthew* says, that *Jesus* bade the *Marys* tell " the Disciples, he was going to *Galilee:* Whereas " St. *John* says, that *Jesus* bade *Mary* tell the Dis- " ciples, he was going to his Father." And why may not these be different parts of the same message? The Gentleman's Philosophy is not able to shew the one inconsistent with the other. And, I hope, no Historian is bound to relate every article and every passage that happens. The blessed *Jesus*, before his crucifixion, had told his Disciples, not only that after his resurrection, he would go before them into *Galilee*, but, that he was likewise to go to the Father. *I came*, says our Lord, *forth from the Father, and am come into the world: Again, I leave the world, and go to the Father* (*p*). When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, this was the message he sent by the women to his Disciples; *Go*, says he, *and tell my brethren, I am thus far in my way to ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God. But, before I ascend, let them go into* Galilee, *and there shall they see me.* And, as St. *John* and St. *Matthew* do only report, one the former, and the other the latter part of this message; surely, that man does but shame philosophy, who takes upon him to affirm, here the witnesses disagree, and contradict one another.

After these objections, our Philosopher shews his talent in proposing more questions, than a wise man will undertake to answer. " If *Jesus* (says he) and " the Angels, or Angel, were at the sepulchre as well " after as before *Peter* and *John* were there, why " then did they withdraw upon their coming, " *&c.?*" In general, I shall only observe, that the

(*p*) Joh. xvi. 28. Vid. xiv. 28, 29.

Apoſtles being deſigned witneſſes to the world of the reſurrection of *Jeſus*, it ſeems highly proper, that in order to prepare them for a thorough, rational conviction of the certainty of this event, they ſhould have no viſions or apparitions, that might alarm their paſſions and diſturb their thoughts, (if poſſible to prevent it) but have their minds kept always quiet and compoſed, fully maſters of themſelves, and capable of examining every circumſtance freely and without prejudice. This, I apprehend, might be the reaſon, why the Angels did not appear to *Peter* and *John* at the ſepulchre, and why the women were employed to give the firſt warning to the Apoſtles concerning this event; whereby they might be put upon their guard, and prepare themſelves ſtrictly to examine into the truth of the matter, when *Jeſus* himſelf ſhould appear to them; which was the diſpoſition that St. *Thomas* conceived, upon his hearing from the other Apoſtles, that they had ſeen *Jeſus*; he was determined not to believe without the moſt inconteſtible evidence that his own ſenſes could procure him. All this ſeems quite conſiſtent with true philoſophy. And I clearly foreſee, that had the ground of our Philoſopher's objection been out of the way, and the Angels appeared to the two Diſciples at the ſepulchre, neither would this have ſatisfied him: I doubt, it would have afforded him other ſort of objections, that might have appeared a little more threatening. Mean while, as the caſe now ſtands, I am able to ſee nothing that can hinder our Philoſopher from admitting the account I have preſumed to give of the withdrawing of the Angels, but that it may appear to him a little too rational. For, alas! neither common ſenſe nor common language muſt have leave to protect the Goſpel-Hiſtorians: Theſe are fences too weak to

ſtop

ſtop this moral Philoſopher in his unbridled courſe to ruin their character.

He complains, "There is as little harmony a-"mong the witneſſes about the Angels at the ſe-"pulchre, as there is among them about the ap-"pearances of *Jeſus*. For St. *Matthew* mentions "only one Angel; St. *Mark* calls him a young man; "St. *Luke* ſays two men; but the women called "them Angels; St. *John* calls them two Angels (*q*)." And will not common language juſtify any Hiſtorian in uſing theſe terms promiſcuouſly? If a man knows not thus much, he has ſet up too ſoon to inſtruct mankind. Nor, as to the different accounts with reſpect to the number of thoſe Angels, do theſe Hiſtorians take any other freedom, but what is uſed by all other Hiſtorians. *Matthew* and *Mark* mention only one Angel; and *Luke* and *John* mention two. Thus, in relating who gathered up the relics of *Auguſtus*, *Suetonius* mentions only the *Roman* Knights; and *Dio* mentions *Livia* along with them. In ſhort, when Hiſtorians, without ſwerving from truth, or hurting the main hiſtory, are pleaſed to report, ſome more, and ſome fewer circumſtances, it is unreaſonable to find fault with them, but ridiculous to charge them with contradictions.

Upon this article, I have only further to add: The Gentleman's obſervation concerning the incredulity of the Apoſtles, in relation to the report of the women, may well lead us into a perſuaſion of the honeſty of the Apoſtles, that they had no biaſs in favour of the reſurrection, and were not diſpoſed to believe it upon hear-ſay evidence; but, how it can tend to ſatisfy us, as our Philoſopher would have it, that the report of the women was altogether falſe, is beyond my comprehenſion. But his reaſoning

(*q*) P. 41, 42.

ing is no worse than his honesty. Not to observe, that he very well knows, that the Disciples came afterwards to rest fully assured of the truth of the women's report; here he meanly imposes upon his Reader, in telling him only, "The Disciples confess, that *Mary* herself did not know whether it "was *Jesus* or the Gardener (*r*)." It is true, the Historian relates, that *Mary*, having no suspicion of the resurrection, supposed *Jesus*, when she saw him, to be the Gardener: But, does he not immediately inform us, she soon became sensible of her mistake, and knew him to be *Jesus*? And what hurt it would have done to our Philosopher's argument, or what blemish it would have cast upon the Gentleman's honesty, to have told the Reader thus much, the world will determine. I leave it to himself to declare, what that moral Philosopher is intitled to, who, under that character, setting up to teach and direct the Public, takes the opportunity to disguise things, and to mislead mankind.

The next article in order, is the appearance of *Jesus* to the two Disciples going to *Emmaus*; which is his second appearance. And a beautiful account of this piece of history is given us by St. *Luke* xxiv. 13. which cannot but approve itself to every man of taste and judgment.

As to the names of these two Disciples; one of them, we are told by St. *Luke*, was called *Cleopas*; but, as he names not the other, it is not a little entertaining to find the Gentleman taking upon him to inform the world, his name was *Simon*, nay *Simon Peter*; and upon this falling into one of his fits of wonder, which goes off as contemptibly, in a little piece of ludicrous wit. One easily perceives what has thrown our Philosopher into this blunder.

And

(*r*) P. 42.

And moſt certainly, ſome myſterious power had ſpoiled his eye ſight, that he ſhould not ſee the common conſtruction of words, ſo very obvious to any ſchool-boy.

But, whatever were their names, (if I may be allowed to conjecture, probably the Diſciple not named was *Luke* himſelf; who, as a Phyſician, might have been called thither.) Certain it is, that theſe two Diſciples did, for ſome time, walk and converſe with *Jeſus*, without knowing it was he, till they came to the village of *Emmaus*. And our Philoſopher will give me leave to think, that the reaſon aſſigned for their not knowing him is juſt, and may well ſatisfy any Philoſopher whatſoever. St. *Mark* tells us, that *he appeared to them in another form*. What that particular form was, no man, I ſuppoſe, will pretend to determine. Only, in general, one may ſay, his outward form or dreſs, or the circumſtances he was in, as to his outward appearance, were ſuch, ſo different from what he uſed to be in among his Diſciples, that nothing about him could immediately raiſe in one's mind the particular idea of *Jeſus*. Now, the bleſſed *Jeſus* in this other dreſs or form, in which none of his followers had ever ſeen him, coming up with the two Diſciples in their way to *Emmaus*; is it any thing ſtrange or improbable, that they ſhould not know him? Indeed, upon ſtrict examination, or their perſiſting in a narrow, curious view, they might, I doubt not, have come to diſtinguiſh who he was; but, as the firſt ſight they had of him bore no reſemblance to the perſon of *Jeſus*; and as they had been eye-witneſſes of his crucifixion and death, upon which they had given him up for loſt, without all hopes of his returning to life again; it is unimaginable to me, how it was poſſible for them to conceive any

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the leaſt ſuſpicion, that the perſon who had joined them was *Jeſus*. As naturally therefore, as the effect follows the cauſe, *their eyes were holden*, as St. *Luke* expreſſes it, *that they ſhould not know him*, or their eyes were hindered from perceiving who he was. Nor needs any thing of this nature ſurpriſe the Gentleman; he is himſelf a ſtanding inſtance, how far an ingrained prejudice againſt Chriſtianity can blind a man's eyes, that he ſhall not be able to ſee a plain viſible object, the common conſtruction of language. Thus, I ſay, the two Diſciples going to *Emmaus*, were very naturally, I may ſay neceſſarily, prevented from apprehending, that the perſon, who had come up with them, was *Jeſus*. And as the converſation in which they engaged was ſo very concerning, that it could not but engroſs all their thoughts, as we find it did; and as *Jeſus*, in explaining his own character, and particularly that it behoved *Chriſt* to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day, gave no hint that he was the perſon, it is natural to imagine, that the impreſſion they had received from the firſt ſight of this ſtranger, muſt ſtill remain, and they continue ignorant who he was. Accordingly they are ſtill void of all ſuſpicion in whoſe company they were, till they went into the houſe, and were ſet down to meat; and then it came to paſs, as *Jeſus* ſat at meat with them, *he took bread, and bleſſed it, and brake, and gave to them, and their eyes were opened, and they knew him.* O tranſporting glorious ſight! ——The import of this hiſtory is briefly this:

According to the prejudices of the *Jewiſh* nation, theſe two Diſciples were, no doubt, poſſeſſed with the certain proſpect of a temporal kingdom that ſhould never fail under the endleſs reign of their *Meſſiah*. It was this that rendered them quite irreconcileable to the thoughts of the crucifixion, and

altogether

altogether incapable of the hopes of the reſurrection. In order, therefore, to relieve them of thoſe miſtaken notions, and to prepare them for the diſcovery he was about to make, the bleſſed *Jeſus*, beginning at *Moſes*, and all the Prophets, expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himſelf; in particular, that *Chriſt* or the *Meſſiah* ought to have ſuffered theſe things, which had befallen *Jeſus* of *Nazareth*, that he ought to riſe again from the dead, then aſcend into heaven, and there enter into his glory, the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. Such were the inſtructions with which *Jeſus* entertained the two Diſciples in their way to *Emmaus*; and by ſuch inſtructions they were fully reconciled to the true character of the *Meſſiah*, all their prejudices againſt his ſufferings, his death and paſſion, were removed, and their hearts were warmed with the glowing hopes of his reſurrection, or of their ſeeing him again alive. *Did not our heart (ſay they) burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?* Now, in this ſituation of mind, the two Diſciples ſat down at table, and being thus prepared, without any diſtraction of thought, to diſcern who he was; with his own proper air and addreſs, and in his uſual form of words and expreſſions, *he took bread, and bleſſed it, and brake it, and gave it to them.* Upon this action of our Saviour, the two Diſciples immediately ſtruck with the idea of *Jeſus*, their attention is rouſed, they fix their eyes, they ſurvey the perſon of this ſtranger, they ſee and know him to be *Jeſus*. And thus *their eyes were opened and they knew him.* Nor is it to be doubted but *Jeſus* diſcovered himſelf without reſerve, and left them fully ſatisfied. This, in my apprehenſion, is an eaſy and natural account of this

appearance

appearance of *Jeſus*, which ſtands to reaſon and philoſophy.

I confeſs, that from the manner, wherein St. *Luke* ſeems to tell us, this appearance was concluded, one may be apt to think, that *Jeſus* was no ſooner known to theſe two Diſciples, than *he vaniſhed out of their ſight*, or (which I take to be the true meaning of this phraſe (*ſ*) ἄφαντος ἐγένετο) than *he withdrew from them unexpectedly*; which might lead one to apprehend, that their knowledge of him could be but ſlight, and not very certain. But here it is to be remarked, as I have before obſerved, that an Hiſtorian's barely connecting one thing immediately with another, can be held no ſort of proof, that betwixt theſe two events, there was no intermediate ones: But, in order to underſtand whether any events did actually intervene, we muſt conſult the parallel places of the ſame or other Hiſtorians, or conſider the nature and circumſtances of things. When, therefore, one would ſatisfy one's ſelf, whether, betwixt the firſt diſcovery the two Diſciples had of *Jeſus*, and his withdrawing himſelf, there were any intermediate events; as there is no parallel place of any Hiſtorian to aſſiſt us, one can only here conſider the nature and circumſtances of things. Let it then be obſerved, there is in this paſſage nothing that can determine us to think, that ſo ſoon as the Diſciples came to diſcern, who he was, *Jeſus* withdrew and diſappeared. Indeed, had the Hiſtorian expreſsly ſaid, that the Diſciples had but a glimpſe of

(*ſ*) The Scholiaſt upon Euripides explains ἄφαντος ἐγένετο, by ἀφάνης ἐγένετο, which, in Joſephus, ſignifies *to make one's eſcape*, or *to get out of ſight*, διαδράσας ἐκ τῆς μαχης ἀφάνης ἐγένετο· Antiq. l. 20. c. 8. § 6. So that to underſtand by this phraſe, *the vaniſhing into air*, like what they call a *ſpectre*, is childiſh.

of *Jeſus*, or that the moment they ſaw it was *Jeſus*, he ſuddenly got away or retired from them; this might have put an end to the queſtion. But, as St. *Luke* only relates the main events, and connects them in ſuch manner as not to exclude any intermediate ones, (*and their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he unexpectedly withdrew from them,*) it would be quite as raſh to pronounce from this paſſage of St. *Luke*, that betwixt their knowing *Jeſus*, and his withdrawing from them, there were no interveening events; as it would be from the forecited paſſage of *Xiphilinus* "(when he had thus ſaid, "he retired into his chamber, and run himſelf "through;)" to declare, that betwixt *Otho*'s withdrawing, and his killing himſelf, there was no one event that happened. Beſides, as it was certainly the deſign of *Jeſus* to make himſelf known to theſe two Diſciples; and as, for this purpoſe, he was at pains to explain to them the Scriptures, particularly, that it behoved *Chriſt* to ſuffer death, and to riſe again from the dead; meaning thereby to prevent their being ſeized with any confuſion of thought, any dread or hurry of paſſion, and to ſecure a compoſure of mind fit to examine things without prejudice, when he ſhould come to diſcover himſelf: As this, I ſay, was the deſign of *Jeſus*, and theſe were the means he employed to make it effectual, no man can imagine, that, upon the firſt ſight the Diſciples had of him, he immediately withdrew out of their ſight; but that he continued with them for ſome time, (perhaps, till their repaſt was ended) and put it in their power to ſatisfy themſelves fully as to the reality of his perſon; which is manifeſtly the caſe in all his other appearances. Again, as theſe two Diſciples were certainly in the ſame ſituation of mind with the reſt of their bre-

thren, under no biaſs to hope or wiſh for the reſurrection, but ſo ſtrongly prejudiced againſt it, that they judged it an event abſurd and incredible, ſo incredible that no one would rely on another's evidence; it cannot be imagined that men of ſuch diſpoſitions, would reſt themſelves ſatisfied, that the perſon, who, upon their getting but a ſlight view of him, had immediately diſappeared, was no other but *Jeſus*. And therefore, as we are told by St. *Luke*, that theſe two Diſciples ἐπέγνωσαν knew him to be *Jeſus*; or, as St. *Mark* has it, that *Jeſus* ἐφανερώθη, *was made known or manifeſt* unto them; it muſt be allowed, that they had more than a bare glance; that they were freely admitted to examine his body, in ſuch a manner as could not but afford them full ſatisfaction.

Thus, from conſidering the nature and circumſtances of things, one is neceſſarily led to conclude, that betwixt the firſt ſight theſe two Diſciples had of *Jeſus*, and his withdrawing from them, ſeveral events muſt have interveened, that brought them to the certain knowledge of his being *Jeſus*. And as no man, ſo far as I am able to judge, that deſerves the name of a Philoſopher, can poſſibly avoid this concluſion; let the Gentleman recollect with what juſtneſs and decency he has propoſed ſo many ſilly ludicrous reflections and queſtions. There is indeed one queſtion abundantly proper, "Can a-"ny good reaſon (ſays he) be given, why *Jeſus* "did not diſcover himſelf to them by the way (*t*)?" And why *Jeſus* did not thus diſcover himſelf, I have, methinks, given a very good reaſon; ſuch a reaſon as may teach our Philoſopher, that the appearances of *Jeſus* are chargeable with neither impoſture nor enthuſiaſm.

Our

(*t*) P. 44.

Our Philoſopher leads us next to conſider the *third* appearance of *Jeſus*, which was to all his Apoſtles. And he tells us, that "the evidence of "this appearance of *Jeſus* to the Apoſtles, on "which the faith of the world is to reſt, is wor-"thy our regard. St. *Matthew* (ſays he) St. "*Mark*, and St. *Luke* agree, that when the Diſ-"ciples were made acquainted with the reſurrecti-"on of *Jeſus*, they met him for the firſt and laſt "time. But this St. *John*, the Author of the *Acts*, "and St. *Paul* contradict; for they tell us of o-"ther appearances afterwards.——And even, as "to this laſt appearance of *Jeſus*, St. *Matthew* diſ-"agrees with St. *Luke*, both as to time and place; "for, while St. *Luke* makes it to have been at *Je-"ruſalem*, on the evening of the day of the re-"ſurrection, St. *Matthew* ſays, it was at a moun-"tain in *Galilee*, where *Jeſus* had appointed them; "therefore the Diſciples could not be there on the "evening of the day he aroſe (*u*)."

Theſe are the Gentleman's objections. And one could have wiſhed he had condeſcended to declare the particular reaſons that induced him to aſſure the world, that *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke*, do all of them mention the firſt and laſt, or the only appearance that *Jeſus* made to his Apoſtles. Indeed, our Philoſopher, by his great ſkill in Geography, proves an article that never was debated, namely, that the appearance mentioned by *Matthew* differs, as to time and place, from that mentioned by *Luke*. But what evidence has he, that theſe two Hiſtorians do each of them mean the firſt and laſt appearance of *Jeſus*, and are therefore contradictory the one to the other? In my apprehenſion, a very moderate degree of philoſophy will teach a man, that the appearance

(*u*) P. 47.

pearance mentioned by *Matthew* cannot poſſibly be underſtood to be the firſt and laſt, or the only appearance of *Jeſus* to his Apoſtles.

During the life of *Jeſus*, as the Diſciples were by no means able to comprehend the meaning of his riſing again from the dead; ſo after his death, ſo far were they beyond all hopes of his reſurrection, that they gave him up for quite loſt, and judged the whole deſign he had formed abſolutely ruined: So irrecoverably, in their opinion, was *Jeſus* loſt, and his deſign ruined, that when the event of his reſurrection came to be reported, no one of them would admit the truth of it, but upon the teſtimony of his own proper ſenſes. Now, let a Philoſopher conſider the nature and circumſtances of things, it ſeems to me impoſſible how he can conceive any the leaſt ſuſpicion, that thoſe men, who had ſeen *Jeſus* crucified at *Jeruſalem*, and all their hopes buried with him, ſhould go from thence to a mountain in *Galilee*, in order to meet with him whom they never expected to ſee in life again. Nothing can be more manifeſt, than that before they could undertake ſuch a journey, upon ſuch an errand, they muſt have been fully ſatisfied as to the certain truth of the reſurrection; nay, they muſt have ſeen *Jeſus* himſelf, every man with his own eyes. Accordingly, in this very paſſage of St. *Matthew*, it is fairly inſinuated, or rather neceſſarily implied, that *Jeſus* had formerly appeared to his Diſciples, and ſatisfied them as to the truth of his reſurrection; for otherwiſe how could they receive *an appointment from* Jeſus, and, in conſequence of this appointment, leave *Jeruſalem*, and go to meet with him upon a particular mountain in *Galilee?* Our Philoſopher therefore only ſhews the world, how little he deſerves that character, when he tells them, that this appearance

mentioned

mentioned by St. *Matthew* is the firſt and laſt, or the only appearance that *Jeſus* made to his Diſciples.

As for the Evangeliſt *Mark*, he likewiſe, as well as St. *Matthew*, particularly reports, that the women had received a meſſage to be delivered to the Apoſtles, letting them know, that *Jeſus goeth*, i. e. *is to go*, (not *was gone*, as by a poor ſhift our upright Philoſopher would help a deſperate cauſe (*x*)) before them into *Galilee*; and that there they ſhould ſee him. Here, then, there is a plain intimation of a meeting which *Jeſus* was to have with his Diſciples in *Galilee*. And, no doubt, the women delivered their meſſage. But, as I have juſt now explained from the nature of things, that the Apoſtles, without ſeeing *Jeſus* with their own eyes, could not conceive a thought of going to *Galilee*, upon any proſpect of their meeting him; ſo the ſame reaſoning is here equally concluſive: And St. *Mark* further confirms it in reporting, that when *Mary Magdalene* told the Diſciples that *Jeſus* had appeared to her, *they believed not*, they did not believe that *Jeſus* had riſen from the dead, and that ſhe had ſeen him. And ſurely no man can imagine, that the Apoſtles went to meet a perſon in *Galilee*, of whom they thought he was ſtill lying dead at *Jeruſalem*. Of neceſſity, therefore, before they could have a thought of going to *Galilee*, they muſt have ſeen *Jeſus* alive, and been abſolutely aſſured of his reſurrection. Accordingly, St. *Mark* informs us, that Jeſus *appeared to the eleven as they ſat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief, and hardneſs of heart, becauſe they believed not them which had ſeen him after he was riſen* (*y*). And, from the circumſtances of this appearance, nothing can be more manifeſt,

(*x*) P. 54. (*y*) Mark xvi. 14.

manifeſt, than that it is the firſt appearance of *Jeſus* to his Apoſtles, or that they had not ſeen him before, but only heard of his reſurrection by report from others. Nor does our Philoſopher herein diſagree with us; only he takes upon him to alledge, that as this was the firſt appearance, ſo it was the laſt and the only one that *Jeſus* made to his Apoſtles. But where, does our Philoſopher think, did this appearance happen? Why, he tells us, "If "St. *Mark* means *Galilee*, he contradicts St. *Luke*: "If he means *Jeruſalem*, he contradicts himſelf; "for he ſays, *the Angel or young man told them* Jeſus "was gone *before the Diſciples into* Galilee, *and there* "*they ſhould ſee him* (z)." A moſt unhappy ſituation this! St. *Mark* muſt either contradict St. *Luke*, or contradict himſelf. 'Tis agreed, however, that according to St. *Mark*, *Jeſus* muſt have met his Diſciples in *Galilee*. But (ſetting aſide our Philoſopher's unfair ſcandalous *was gone*) what is the circumſtance in this appearance here related by St. *Mark*, that can afford any man the leaſt hint, that it happened in *Galilee?* Till the moment of this appearance, the Apoſtles had given no credit to the reports of thoſe other Diſciples who had ſeen *Jeſus* after he had riſen, but continued hardened in their hearts and obſtinate unbelievers. And can ſuch men be thought to have undertaken a journey to *Galilee*, in hopes of there ſeeing *Jeſus?* Impoſſible. No propoſition in *Euclid* can be more certain, than that the Apoſtles could not ſtir from *Jeruſalem*, upon any proſpect of their any-where meeting with *Jeſus*. This appearance, therefore, did moſt certainly happen at *Jeruſalem*. And therein St. *Mark* agrees with St. *Luke*, as well as St. *John* does, who,

(z) P. 54.

who, by the circumſtances, as our Philoſopher allows, makes the firſt appearance of *Jeſus* to be at *Jeruſalem*, tho' he does not mention the place (*a*). So that with reſpect to the place of this appearance, St. *Mark* does no ways contradict St. *Luke*; and far leſs can he be underſtood to contradict himſelf. It is true, the appearance which here he mentions, is, beyond all queſtion, the firſt appearance of *Jeſus* to his Apoſtles; but he gives not the leaſt hint, that it is likewiſe his laſt, or his only appearance; on the contrary, he intimates that another appearance was to happen in *Galilee*, which our Philoſopher ſeems to think, could not but happen, and which is that particular appearance recorded by St. *Matthew*.

Thus far, therefore, our Philoſopher will give me leave to ſay, I have demonſtrated, that the appearance mentioned by St. *Matthew*, cannot poſſibly be the firſt, but that another, without controverſy, muſt have happened before it: And that the appearance mentioned by St. *Mark*, is indeed the firſt, but cannot poſſibly be laſt; for that another appearance, as it was intimated, muſt have happened in *Galilee*. So that we have only now to conſider the caſe of St. *Luke*.

And, to be ſure, this Evangeliſt mentions only one appearance of *Jeſus* to his Apoſtles, without giving us any intimation of another: Nor is it to be queſtioned, but this is the firſt appearance; before which, the Apoſtles were only alarmed, as he obſerves, with the reports of other people. But does St. *Luke* expreſsly ſay, or but darkly hint, or at any diſtance inſinuate, that this was the firſt and laſt, or the only appearance of *Jeſus* to his Apoſtles? This no other man can affirm. How then comes

(*a*) P. 48.

comes our Philoſopher thus to diſtinguiſh himſelf, and ſo avowedly to publiſh to the world, that St. *Luke* makes this appearance of *Jeſus* the laſt and the only one to his Apoſtles? I have already ſaid, that St. *Luke* mentions only one appearance, and is quite ſilent as to any other. But, whilſt St. *Luke* openly aſſerts the truth of the main hiſtory, I mean that of the reſurrection, and gives us a plain proof or inſtance of it in this one appearance of *Jeſus* to his Apoſtles (without mentioning that to the two Diſciples;) of what conſequence can any mortal man think it, that he is barely ſilent as to any other inſtance or appearance, which here may be conſidered only as a circumſtance? For an Hiſtorian having given us what he apprehends a plain inſtance, or a ſufficient proof of the fact or event he relates, all other further proofs or inſtances he may regard as circumſtances not neceſſary to be reported. So far, in my apprehenſion, is St. *Luke*'s ſilence in this matter, from being any thing of a proof, that there was no other appearance, or that he believed and knew of no other; that any thing of a Philoſopher would be aſhamed to propoſe it even as a colour of ſuſpicion. And let the Gentleman tell us what other reaſon he can pretend for his preſuming to aſſure mankind, St. *Luke* ſays, *that* Jeſus *was with his Apoſtles only one day, and aſcended on the evening of the reſurrection day* (*b*). By the univerſal conſent of all antiquity, St. *Luke* is held to be the Author of the *Acts* of the Apoſtles: And there he expreſsly declares, that *to his Apoſtles* Jeſus *ſhewed himſelf alive after his paſſion, by many infallible proofs, being ſeen of them forty days*. Indeed our Philoſopher is pleaſed to deny, that St. *Luke* is the Author of the *Acts* of the Apoſtles. And, for this opinion, whatever may be his private reaſons, this is the only one he makes public;

(*b*) P. 48.

public; "The Author of the *Acts* ſays, that *Jeſus* "was with the Apoſtles forty days, St. *Luke* only "one day. Now, could this Author be St. *Luke*, "who ſo contradicts St. *Luke* (*c*)." Why, truly, at this rate of explaining hiſtory, and finding out contradictions, and thereby proving a book is ſpurious, I do believe, one may undertake to prove, there is hardly a hiſtory in the world that can be held authentic, or to be writ by the perſon whoſe name it bears. If one ſhall incline to prove either the hiſtory or the Annals of *Tacitus* to be ſpurious, the Gentleman's argument will ſerve effectually. Let us take the hiſtory, and our Philoſopher's reaſoning is thus: The Author of this hiſtory ſays, "That *Cratiſmandua* having ſeized *Caractacus* by "guile, delivered him to the *Romans*; but denies "that *Caractacus* had recourſe to the faith and pro-"tection of that Queen, and that ſhe delivered him "in bonds to the conquerors (*d*)." *Tacitus*, in his his Annals, ſays, "That *Cratiſmandua* did not ſeize "*Caractacus* by treachery; but that he had recourſe "to her faith and protection, and ſhe delivered him "in bonds to the conquerors (*e*)." Now, could this Author be *Tacitus* who ſo contradicts *Tacitus?*

But, not to diſturb the Gentleman in his conceit, about the Author of the *Acts* of the Apoſtles, I ſhall not here inſiſt upon this paſſage of the *Acts*. It is fully ſufficient to ſay, that St. *Luke*'s mentioning in his Goſpel only one appearance of *Jeſus* to his Apoſtles, and his being ſilent as to any other, is not ſo much as the ſhadow of a proof, that this is the firſt and laſt, or the only appearance of *Jeſus*, or that St. *Luke* knew of no other. And I am ſorry to obſerve, that our moral Philoſopher goes beyond the

(*c*) Ibid. (*d*) Tacit. Hiſt. lib. 3. § 45. (*e*) Id. Annal. lib. 12. § 36.

bounds of all honesty, in telling the world that St. *Luke* says, Jesus *ascended on the evening of the resurrection day, and was only one day* (he should have said, a few moments) *with the Apostles.* Such an imposition upon St. *Luke*, and upon mankind, is so unworthy a Gentleman, so unbecoming even a pretender to fair dealing, that one cannot but be greatly concerned, there are such characters in the world, especially among those who set up to lead or instruct mankind. It is true, that, beginning at this first appearance of *Jesus*, St. *Luke* goes on, without interruption, in a continued narration, till he comes to relate the ascension; so that these two events do here seem to be immediately connected together. But, as I have already frequently observed, no man that understands history can take upon him to affirm, that betwixt these two particular events, there were no other events interveening. This must be determined from the nature and circumstances of things, and from the accounts of other Historians. And here, in attending to the nature and circumstances of things, it appears, in any sense, beyond credibility, that this was the appearance at which *Jesus* ascended. And do not all the other Gospel-historians, not excepting St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark*, give us to understand, that, betwixt the first appearance of *Jesus* to the Apostles, and his ascension, there were several appearances that interveened? But this I shall have occasion further to explain, when I come to consider our Philosopher's objections, with respect to the history of the ascension.

Upon the whole, it is apparent, that although *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, do each of them relate only one appearance; yet no one of them can at any rate be understood to mean the first and last, or the only appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles: And consequently, that, with respect to the appearances of

Jesus,

Jesus, they are in no degree contradicted by the other New Testament Writers, who mention more appearances than one. Our Philosopher's reasoning, in going about to shew the Gospel-historians involved in contradictions, would confound all history. *Livy* reports, that *Scipio Africanus* was saluted King by the *Spaniards*, for the first and last time, after the battle of *Betula* (*f*): But *Polybius* tells us, that both before and after that battle, he was saluted King several times (*g*). But after this manner, (which is the very manner, wherein our Philosopher is pleased to treat the Gospel-historians) to go about to prove, that *Livy* and *Polybius* contradict one another, would be judged contemptible trifling, or rather shew a man smitten with lunacy. And indeed, our Philosopher's passion, to have the Gospel-historians to contradict one another, is a great deal too extravagant, and betrays itself too openly. He tells us, that as to (what he calls) this last, or only appearance of *Jesus*, "St. *Matthew* disagrees "with St. *Luke*, both as to time and place; for "St. *Matthew* says, it was at a mountain in *Ga*- "*lilee*, where *Jesus* had appointed them; and St. "*Luke* says, it was at *Jerusalem*, *on the evening of* "*the day of the resurrection* (*h*)." But, as neither of these Historians say, or at any distance seem to say, that *Jesus*, after his resurrection, appeared only once to his Apostles; and the Gentleman's sagacity has enabled him to discern, that the appearance which St. *Matthew* mentions is different, both as to time and place, from that mentioned by St. *Luke*, might not his honesty have disposed him to acknowledge, that from hence the conclusion is, these are certainly two different appearances; two appearances

(*f*) Liv. lib. 27. § 21. (*g*) Polyb. lib. 10. § 35, 37.
(*h*) P. 47, 48.

pearances ſo conſiſtent with one another, that, as I have above obſerved from the nature of things, the appearance in *Galilee*, mentioned by St. *Matthew*, could not poſſibly have had a being, unleſs that at *Jeruſalem*, mentioned by St. *Luke*, had firſt happened? This, doubtleſs, is the natural conſequence; only the bounds of nature are not able to contain a man acted by a furious lawleſs ſpirit of infidelity. I am confident, that no Chriſtian will decline having the Goſpel-hiſtory examined according to the ſtricteſt rules of criticiſm and philoſophy; and to this trial it has been often put. But it ſeems hard to ſuffer a man, in uſing the Goſpel-hiſtorians in a manner, for which he would be held unſufferable in the caſe of any other Hiſtorians. As it may be well expected in a rational inſtitution, the goſpel of *Chriſt* is againſt all perſecution, and *every one that nameth the name of Chriſt* ought to abhor it. But this cannot hinder me from thinking, the *Republic of Letters* ought to diſown this Gentleman, and to declare, he is no Philoſopher, far leſs a moral Philoſpher; he bears not the leaſt regard to the nature and relations of things.

In the concluſion of this article, our Philoſopher entertains us with ſome very curious and learned remarks, beginning with St. *Thomas*'s conduct, as to his belief of the reſurrection.

1*ſt*, "St. *Thomas*'s infidelity and faith were very "extraordinary. He would not believe that *Jeſus* "was riſen from the dead, except he ſaw and felt "the wounds that cauſed his death (*i*)." This our Philoſopher judges highly unreaſonable; and apprehends, that his Diſciples might have ſatisfied themſelves with leſs. "Was not *Jeſus* (ſays he) to be "known without thoſe wounds, or the prints or "ſcars of them, by his own Diſciples? Had they "forgot

(*i*) P. 49.

" forgot the idea of his perſon, and the ſound of " his voice in ſo ſhort a time?" Upon ſuch evidence, I confeſs, the Diſciples ought, in reaſon, to have believed the reſurrection. But, the Gentleman, I hope, upon ſecond thoughts, will not be ſo forward in condemning St. *Thomas* for being ſo much upon his guard, or ſo very cautious in admitting the truth of an event ſo very extraordinary. It ſhews, at leaſt, the firmneſs and honeſty of the man, and that he was not to be led away by any cheat or impoſtor. Nor can I much approve of our Philoſopher's ridiculing St. *Thomas*'s demand of that particular inſtance of ſenſible demonſtration. *Homer* ſeems to lay great ſtreſs upon ſuch a proof in the caſe of *Ulyſſes*, without ſuſpecting it liable to ridicule, or to this wiſe objection; " if theſe marks " were only prints or ſcars of wounds in his hands " and ſide, could not another perſon, who might " have a mind to deceive, make ſcars in thoſe " places, or the appearance of ſuch wounds?" *Euryclea* had not forgot the idea of *Ulyſſes*'s perſon, and the ſound of his voice.

Αλλ' ἄγε νῦν τινά φημι ἐοικότα ὧδε ἰδέσθαι
Ὡς σύ δέμας, φωνήν τε, πόδας τ' Ὀδυσῆϊ ἔοικας.
Odyſſ. xix.

But, when ſhe came to diſcover the ſcar of the wound in his thigh, ſhe then immediately knew he was *Ulyſſes*; and was fully ſatisfied as to the identity of his real perſon:

- - - αὐτίκα δ' ἔγνω
Οὐλὴν τήν ποτέ μιν σῦς ἤλασε λευκῷ ὀδόντι.
- - - - - - -
Ἡ μάλ' Ὀδυσσεύς ἐστι, φίλον τέκος. ——
Ibid.

This

This ſcar *Homer* always calls an inconteſtible proof. As ſuch *Ulyſſes* ſhews it, when his father *Laertes* demanded ſome undeniable evidence of his being his ſon *Ulyſſes:* And, to convince them beyond doubt, he ſhews it to *Eumeus* and *Philetas*, two old ſervants of the family.

Having ſo far mentioned this paſſage of *Homer*, I cannot but obſerve further: Although *Euryclea*'s diſcovery of *Ulyſſes* happened in the preſence of *Penelope*, and was attended with ſuch circumſtances as might have engaged her attention, and led her to underſtand that her gueſt was her huſband; yet ſhe came not then to diſcern who he was. And, I can venture to ſay, that the reaſon that *Homer* aſſigns, is this, *her eyes were holden, that ſhe ſhould not know him*, which the Poet repreſents as the effect of *Minerva*'s diverting her mind, or employing it otherwiſe:

Η δ' ὅτ' ἀδρῆσαι δυνατ' ἀντίη, ὅτε νοῆσαι·
Τῇ γαρ Αθηναίη νόον ἔτραπεν. —— *Ibid.*

So that one, with good reaſon, may alledge, *Homer* never would have blamed *Thomas*'s demanding ſuch a proof for the truth of the reſurrection: Nor would he have judged the caſe of the two Diſciples going to *Emmaus* (*their eyes were holden, that they ſhould not know him*) a matter of ſo much ridicule. But, perhaps, the Gentleman's taſte of things is much more refined, and far preferable to that of *Homer*'s! And, I confeſs, few men can be capable of propounding wiſer queſtions than our Philoſopher: "Were theſe prints (ſays he) better to be "known than the form of his perſon, which they "had ſo often ſeen?" By no means; otherwiſe, the ſeeing them was to little purpoſe. But, St. *Thomas*

Thomas might think, that after his resurrection, these prints were become necessary parts of the form of his body; and his seeing them could not well lessen his conviction as to the identity of his Master's real person.

In his *2d* Remark, our Philosopher calls in question the truth of what St. *John* reports concerning the *wound in* Jesus's *side*. And the only reason he goes upon, is this: "This fact (says he) was unknown to St. *Thomas*," (but how to St. *Thomas!* when it is here the very fact he insists upon?) "and the other Apostles; for if they did know it "as well as St. *John*, why do none of them neither "tell us of the fact, nor of these words that refer "to it?" Why, really I do believe, that neither St. *John*, nor any other of the Gospel-Historians, have told us all that they knew. Each of them, no doubt, have related what they judged proper for their purpose; and what more can any sober man expect or demand from any Historian whatsoever? *Livy* tells us, that *Scipio*, having given orders that *Massiva* should not be sold along with the other *African* prisoners, sent him home to his uncle *Masaniſſa*, honoured with presents (*k*): And afterwards informs us, that *Masaniſſa* in his interview with *Scipio*, assured him, that this civility towards his nephew had made him long for an opportunity of becoming an ally to the *Romans* (*l*). Now, why does *Polybius* neither tell us of the fact, (*Scipio*'s granting *Massiva* his liberty,) nor yet of those words (in *Scipio*'s interview with *Masaniſſa*, after the defeat of *Indibilis*,) that refer to it (*m*)? In our Philosopher's manner of explaining history, *Polybius* must deny those events reported by *Livy*, and therein contradict

(*k*) Liv. lib. xxvii. § 21. (*l*) Id. lib. xxviii. § 35.
(*m*) Vid. Polyb. lib. x. § 37. lib. xi. § 31.

dict him; or, to expreſs it in the Gentleman's own language, (when he would have St. *John* to deny what the other Goſpel-Hiſtorians report concerning *Chriſt*'s fortelling his reſurrection to his Diſciples,) I have examined *Polybius*, and find, that he ſays not a word of any of thoſe two events, *but denies them both.* This is the manner of our Philoſopher. What hiſtorical truths the reſt of the world might be left in poſſeſſion of, under the management of this Gentleman, I am not able to foreſee. But ſure I am, that the profeſſors of Chriſtianity ſhould not have left them one article that does not ſuit the cauſe of Infidelity.

From calling in queſtion the ſoldier's wounding the body of *Jeſus* in the ſide, he proceeds to propoſe his doubts as to the reality of his death. But the Gentleman's ſcruples upon this article, only ſhew us, that his Philoſophy is of ſuch a nature as to enable him to deny the ſun is ſhining, whilſt every body elſe ſees all about him in brightneſs. His opinion is, that the conqueſt that ſeems to be obtained over Mr. *Woolſton*, was occaſioned by his granting too much; and therefore to prevent his ſeeming to be conquered too, he will grant nothing, nothing that does not ſerve the deſign he has formed. This is a little too manifeſt in the preſent caſe. The Evangeliſt *John* reports more circumſtances relating to the crucifixion of *Jeſus*, than any of the other Evangeliſts; and our Philoſopher picking out ſuch of thoſe circumſtances as he thinks may anſwer his purpoſe of denying the death of *Chriſt*, or rendering it doubtful, thoſe he grants to be true; but as to the other circumſtances that would infer the reality of his death, theſe, he apprehends, are falſe, and not to be admitted. " If it be doubted (ſays the Gen-" tleman) whether *Jeſus* was really dead when he

" was

" was put into the ſepulchre, which was a cave " hewn out of a rock ; it will be matter of leſs " doubt whether he roſe again ? And why he aroſe " in the night ? Why his countenance was ſo much " altered, that his Diſciples ſcarce knew him but by " his wounds ?. Why he did not appear afterwards " in public, but to his Diſciples only, *&c.* Add to " this, that a healthful, ſober young man, with vi- " gorous ſpirits, does not eaſily part with life, by " wounds in the extreme parts (*o*)." That his countenance was ſo much altered, that his Diſciples ſcarce knew him but by his wounds, is a plain forgery of our moral Philoſopher : But that he returned to life in the night, or towards the riſing of the ſun ; and that he did not appear afterwards in public, but to his Diſciples only ; theſe are real matters of fact, (to be explained in their proper place) but wide from the mark, far from proving that *Jeſus* did not die upon the croſs. I confeſs, indeed, that his dying ſo ſoon, whilſt the two that were crucified with him were ſtill alive, has ſomething in it very extraordinary : But the Goſpel-hiſtory will enable us to account for it. Our Philoſopher muſt then know, that as in numberleſs other inſtances, ſo particularly in this, our bleſſed Saviour was infinitely ſuperior to all the individuals of human race ; he had the intire diſpoſal of his own life, or he was endowed with an inherent power to preſerve his life, or to lay it down, and to take it up again, according as God the Father ſhould be pleaſed to appoint or command him. *Therefore*, ſays our Lord, *doth my Father love me, becauſe I lay down my life* for ſinful mankind, *that*, upon finiſhing their redemption, *I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myſelf : I have power to lay it down, and*

(*o*) P. 50.

I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father (*p*). It was not therefore the malice of the *Jews*, that conſtrained *Jeſus* to ſuffer death, or that violently forced him out of life.

When the band of men, who came to apprehend him, had anſwered, that they were ſeeking *Jeſus of Nazareth*; upon our Lord's telling them, that he was the man, *they went backward, and fell to the ground:* The effect of an inviſible power, which ſhews us, that without his permiſſion they could not poſſibly have taken him. But, without a miracle, by the darkneſs of the night, he might have made his eſcape, and conveyed himſelf out of their reach. Nevertheleſs, Jeſus *knowing all things that ſhould come upon him, went forth, and once again ſaid unto them, whom ſeek ye?* And having as often told them, that he was the man, he delivered himſelf into their hands; only requeſting that his Diſciples might have their liberty: *I have told you*, ſays our Lord, *that I am he. If therefore ye ſeek me, let theſe go their way* (*q*). Wherein we ſtill ſee, that the bleſſed *Jeſus* diſpoſes of his own life, and willingly yields up himſelf to ſuffer death. Nor do we find him acting another part before his Judges. Here, indeed, in general, he aſſerts his innocence, and avowedly claims the character he had all along aſſumed. But he proceeds no farther: He enters into no particular plea or apology, whereby to move his Judges either on the ſide of juſtice or of favour; nay, he plainly ſlights the fair opportunity he had of diſappointing the malice of the *Jews* his perſecutors. For ſo thoroughly was *Pilate* convinced of the integrity and innocence of *Jeſus*, and ſo high an opinion had he conceived of his merit, that he not only was conſtant

(*p*) Joh. x. 17, 18. (*q*) Joh. xviii. 8.

ſtant in publicly declaring, *he found no fault in him*, and therefore argued with the *Jews* in his favour, and ſhewed an earneſtneſs to prevail with them to ſave him; but hearing it objected to *Jeſus*, that *he made himſelf the Son of God*, and, in his notion of things, ſuſpecting *he might be ſo*; alarmed by this particular in his character, *he went again into the judgment-hall*, he aſks *Jeſus from whence he was*, and aſſures him, that as *he had power to crucify him, ſo he had power to releaſe him* (*r*). A fair invitation to *Jeſus*, one would think, to ſhelter himſelf under his authority. And had our Lord improved the opportunity, and directly thrown himſelf upon *Pilate*'s protection, it appears to me more than probable, that *Pilate* would have exerted his power, and ſaved him. But, the bleſſed *Jeſus*, ſlighting all advantages that could promiſe him ſafety, interpoſes in no degree, but ſuffers human paſſions to go on in their own courſe. So that in the end, *Pilate* obſerving that the *Jews* were violently importunate to have him put to death, and that *Jeſus* himſelf was careleſs of his life, yields to the clamours of the multitude, and, with great reluctancy, delivers up *Jeſus* to be crucified. And do we not here likewiſe ſee, that the bleſſed *Jeſus*, as one having the diſpoſal of his own life, does, on purpoſe, reſign himſelf to ſuffer the death of the croſs? A conduct not for our imitation, who have no power over our own lives; and which the Apoſtle *Paul* was far from imitating. But as *Jeſus* declared, *he had power to lay down his life, and power to take it again, and had received ſuch a command of his Father*; with this perfectly conſiſts his not minding his own preſervation, and his giving up himſelf to be crucified. And from the many miracles which he wrought, we may well reſt aſſured, he

(*r*) Joh. xix. 7.—10.

he had a natural power to have come down from the croſs, and confounded the raillery of his enemies. With great truth, therefore, it may be affirmed, that whilſt *Jeſus* was able to have ſaved his life, and triumphed over his enemies, he willingly delivered himſelf into the hands of the *Jews* to be crucified: And upon the croſs, having it ſtill in his power to deliver himſelf, to retain his life, or to lay it down, he ſolemnly reſigns it into the hands of his Father: Or, before the agonies of his body had exhauſted his ſpirits, and put a ſtop to the animal functions, he willingly parted with life, and, by his own proper deed, gave himſelf up to death, *an offering and ſacrifice to God*, for the ſins of the world.

This is a conſiſtent, natural account from the Goſpel-hiſtory, how it happened that *Jeſus* came ſo ſoon to expire upon the croſs: And with this agrees the conduct of the *Centurion*, *and of thoſe that were with him*, *watching* Jeſus (*s*). After our Lord had hung upon the croſs for the ſpace of about ſix hours, *the Centurion who ſtood over againſt him*, *heard him cry with a loud voice*, *It is finiſhed*; *Father*, *into thy hands I commend my ſpirit:* And with this voice, he likewiſe ſaw him immediately *bow his head*, *and give up the ghoſt*. And, as in the opinion of the Centurion, the force and loudneſs of this voice did by no means ſhew the patient in a languiſhing condition, ready either to fall into a *ſyncope*, or totally to expire; but of that ſtrength and vigour of body that made a *deliquium* impoſſible, and would prevent death for a conſiderable time, and make it long and lingering; ſo when, notwithſtanding this, he unexpectedly ſaw, that upon this ſtrong and loud voice, his giving up the ghoſt immediately followed; a great ſurprize ſeized him, he was forced to ſuſpect there was ſomething

(*s*) Matth. xxvii. 54.

thing more than human in the caſe, and according to his Heathen notions, ſeems to have apprehended, that after ſome ſupernatural manner *Jeſus* had left the earth, and gone up to the aſſembly of the Gods. *And when the Centurion which ſtood over againſt him, ſaw that he ſo cried out, and gave up the ghoſt, he ſaid, truly this man was the Son of God* (*t*). And thus what *Pilate* before only ſuſpected, the Centurion declares is now fully confirmed, *in real truth* Jeſus *was the Son of God:* A character which the Heathen gave to thoſe, in whoſe death there appeared any particular circumſtance or acceſſory, which they might think miraculous, or uncommonly favourable to the perſon deceaſed. So that however at this time, and in this part of the world, our moral Philoſopher may incline to diſbelieve the reality of the death of *Jeſus* upon the croſs, we are well perſuaded it was no matter of doubt with the *Roman* Centurion who was preſent, and an eye-witneſs of all that was done, and whoſe curioſity could not but engage him carefully to examine an event, which to him appeared ſo very extraordinary.

It appears too, that when *Joſeph* of *Arimathea* petitioned to have the body of *Jeſus* given him, *Pontius Pilate* was not raſh in granting the requeſt. His conduct was natural and juſt: For as in the common courſe of things, *Pilate* had no reaſon to apprehend it, he was ſurpriſed at the account of his being already dead; and therefore being aware to have full information of the truth of ſo uncommon an event, *he called unto him the Centurion, and aſked whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the Centurion, he gave the body to Joſeph* (*u*).

In

(*t*) Mark xv. 39. (*u*) Mark xv. 43, &c.

In ſhort, as the day following the crucifixion was the Sabbath, when the bodies ſhould not remain upon the croſs; the *Jews* addreſſed *Pilate* beſeeching him, that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. *Then came the ſoldiers, and brake the legs of the firſt, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to* Jeſus, *and ſaw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs.* And does not this yet farther convince us, that even in thoſe circumſtances wherein the death of *Chriſt* was the queſtion, and people's conduct was to be regulated by its certainty, there is no manner of doubt concerning its reality? So thoroughly were they convinced, that *Jeſus* was moſt certainly dead, that *they brake not his legs*, whilſt *they brake the legs of the other two* whom they found living. But *one of the ſoldiers with a ſpear pierced his ſide, and forthwith came there out blood and water* (*x*). A piece of barbarity upon the dead body of *Jeſus*, which I am prone to think, was committed at the direction of ſome of the *Jewiſh* Rulers, who undoubtedly were preſent upon this occaſion, that no means might be neglected, whereby utterly to extinguiſh the life of *Jeſus*, to render the dead body, as they might think, incapable of reviving, and to cut off all hopes or pretences of a reſurrection. To every man, therefore, who knows in what part of the human body blood and water are lodged, if the death of *Chriſt* was doubtful before, it muſt now appear a reality beyond all contradiction. So that, without a degree of ignorance or malice, that blinds or hardens the heart againſt rational conviction, no man can deny the death of *Jeſus* upon the croſs, fooliſhly pretending that the only infallible ſign of death

(*x*) Joh. xix. 31, &c.

death is putrefaction. And indeed this ſign is altogether incompatible with the character of *Jeſus*, who foretold, that *he was to lay down his life of himſelf*, and that *on the third day he was to take it again*; and of whom it had been long before propheſied, that *God would not ſuffer his holy One to ſee corruption* (*y*).

Theſe are ſo many circumſtances relating to the death of *Chriſt*, which, as they ſtand in the hiſtory, do every one of them lead us to regard that event as moſt certain and undoubted. Such of them, as I before hinted, as may be conſiſtent with our Lord's being ſtill alive, our Philoſopher is pleaſed to admit, namely, that *his legs were not broken to haſten and compleat his death, as the others were*; that Joſeph *begged the body of* Jeſus *from* Pilate; that Pilate *marvelled if he were already dead*; and that *he was taken down by* Joſeph *himſelf* (*z*). But as to all the other circumſtances that would put the death of our Lord beyond queſtion, thoſe he finds it neceſſary to ſuppreſs or reject: In particular he denies, that *one of the ſoldiers with a ſpear pierced his ſide*. Where the Gentleman pickt up his philoſophy, no body is concerned; but it muſt be of a very ſingular nature, if it is able to juſtify him in culling matters of fact after this manner, or in thus regarding and rejecting the authority of St. *John*, and of every other New Teſtament Writer, preciſely as it ſuits the cauſe of Infidelity. One can have little pleaſure in making ſuch reflections; but the management is ſo bare-faced and open, that one cannot but obſerve, it is not our Philoſopher's deſign to find out truth, but to ſuppreſs it, and in place thereof to obtrude upon the world untruths and

(*y*) Pſal. xvi. 10. Acts ii. 27, 31. and xiii. 35, 37.
(*z*) P. 50.

and contradictions, that are manifeſtly his own forging. *The end ſanctifies the means*, is a wicked maxim, juſtly abhorred by all ſober men, and I am loth to count it among the principles of a moral Philoſopher.

After all, what can thoſe Gentlemen mean in attempting to perſuade the world, that *Jeſus* did not expire upon the croſs? The conſequence is, we muſt believe, that *Jeſus* was alive after the crucifixion; that he appeared to his Diſciples, that he converſed familiarly with them, and gave them all poſſible proofs of the identity of his perſon. Here therefore we have thoſe moral Philoſophers fairly embarked with us in ſupporting the evidence of what Chriſtians call the *reſurrection*. And I violently ſuſpect, that the evidence whereby that Chriſtian article is juſtified, carries in it ſuch ſtrength and force, that our Infidels, unable to withſtand it, and conſcious of the folly of all their objections, have at length caſt about, and like men in deſpair, catched hold of this ſilly argument, with which they periſh utterly, whilſt therein they manifeſtly betray their own cauſe. In the mean while, now that we are all agreed, that *Jeſus was alive after his crucifixion*, and, without doubt, the Rulers of the *Jews* came very ſoon to hear of it, and ſadly dreaded the conſequences of ſuch an event; I could wiſh our moral Philoſophers not to trouble them with other difficulties, would clearly explain to us by what miracle did it happen, that *Jeſus* was ever after kept out of the hands of his enemies, and eſcaped the falling again a ſacrifice to their enraged paſſions?

From his *third* remark we learn, that the Gentleman is ſo much out of humour with the firſt publiſhers of Chriſtianity, that nothing in their character is able to pleaſe him. In his *firſt* remark, he

he repreſents St. *Thomas* as very extravagant in his demands, with reſpect to the evidence upon which he was willing to admit the truth of the reſurrection of *Jeſus*. *He would not believe that* Jeſus *was riſen from the dead, except he ſaw and felt the wounds that cauſed his death.* "What, (ſays the Gentleman) "was not *Jeſus* to be known without them by his "own Diſciples? Had they forgot the idea of his "perſon, and the ſound of his voice, in ſo ſhort a "time?——Were theſe prints better to be known "than the form of his perſon, which they had ſo "often ſeen?" After this manner does our Philoſopher run on in condemnation of St. *Thomas*, for demanding too much. And yet, when *Jeſus* appeared again to his Diſciples, and ſaid to *Thomas*, *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thruſt it into my ſide; and be not faithleſs but believing:* As *Thomas* upon this came to be fully ſatisfied, that the perſon now appearing was *Jeſus*, and anſwered and ſaid unto him, *My Lord, and my God!* Our Philoſopher is not yet pleaſed with St. *Thomas*'s conduct. He now condemns him for believing on too little, or upon no evidence at all. "He ſeems (ſays the Gentleman) "to have believed without proof of the identity of "his Maſter's real perſon." And then, with a ſilly ſneer, ſubjoins; "a true faith in the reſurrection, "rejects the evidence of ſenſe: *Bleſſed are they* "*that have not ſeen, and yet have believed* (*a*)." A bleſſing which our Philoſopher treats ſo contemptuouſly; and, to avoid it, puts himſelf in ſo ridiculous a dreſs, that, had not his Title-page told the world, *he is a moral Philoſopher*, one ſhould have been tempted to ſuſpect, he only means to ſhew the

(*a*) P. 50.

buffoon, and how contemptibly and inconſiſtently a ludicrous humour can argue in favour of infidelity.

His *4th* and *laſt* remark, is concerning a particular circumſtance mentioned by St. *John* when *Jeſus* appeared once and again to his Diſciples. The circumſtance is this: *Then the ſame day at evening, being the firſt day of the week*, when the doors were ſhut, *where the Diſciples were aſſembled for fear of the* Jews, *came* Jeſus *and ſtood in the midſt.* And again, *then came* Jeſus, the doors being ſhut, *and ſtood in the midſt* (*b*). "Here (ſays our Philoſopher) it is "ſuggeſted, that one ſolid or material body, paſſed "through another ſolid or material body, without "injuring the form of either, both the paſſing and "paſſive body remaining the ſame, contrary to all "the laws of nature (*c*)." What a mean carping diſpoſition is this that takes hold of ſuch a handle to raiſe ſuch an objection! Every man that has common ſenſe himſelf, and allows as much to other people, will underſtand, that, by theſe expreſſions, St. *John* only means to repreſent to us the ſituation the Diſciples were in, when *Jeſus* appeared to them: They were afraid of the *Jews*, and for fear of being ſurpriſed, they had cauſed the doors of the houſe, where they were aſſembled, to be ſhut: Or poſſibly, this phraſe, *the doors being ſhut*, may here rather denote that particular time of night, when people ſhut their gates to prevent looſe idle vagrants from entering. Now, to the Diſciples in thoſe circumſtances, or at that time of night, came *Jeſus*, and ſtood in the midſt: And he has certainly a ſtrange imagination, that can here ſee it ſuggeſted, that to come at his Diſciples, *Jeſus* paſſed through doors or ſtone-walls.

(*b*) John xx. 19, 26. (*c*) P. 50, 51.

ſtone-walls. But a man determined to oppoſe Chriſtianity, is capable of forming the wildeſt images, and, without bluſhing, can go about to impoſe them upon other people. Elſewhere we are told, that *when his Diſciples were aſleep*, Jeſus *came unto them, and ſaid, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The ſpirit indeed is willing, but the fleſh is weak* (*d*). Now, would it not be ridiculous to alledge, that the Hiſtorian means, *Jeſus* ſpoke all this to his Diſciples *faſt aſleep?* And when it is here ſaid, that *when the doors were ſhut*, Jeſus *came to his Diſciples and ſtood in the midſt*; is it not equally ridiculous to alledge, that the Hiſtorian means, "the ſolid body "of *Jeſus* paſſed through the ſolid body of the "doors?" No doubt, as in the former caſe, the Diſciples came to be awakened; ſo, in the latter, the doors came to be opened. In ſhort, if the Gentleman's imputation, in the caſe of St. *John*, be well founded, the beſt Hiſtorians, *Pauſanias* in particular, muſt ſhare in it. We are told, that, during the celebration of the feſtival of *Bacchus*, not far from the town of *Elis*, the god himſelf is pleaſed to honour the feaſt with his preſence. And they give a proof of it, which citizens and ſtrangers have leave to examine and know the truth of. "In the "temple or chapel of *Bacchus*, they place three veſ"ſels quite empty; they lock and ſeal the doors; "next day they return; and finding the doors ſtill "locked and ſealed, they enter into the chapel, "where they ſee the three veſſels full of wine (*e*)." What! do both Prieſts and people, in their way to obſerve this miracle, paſs through the ſolid doors of the temple! Such are the learned remarks of our Philoſopher,

(*d*) Matth. xxvi. 40, 41. (*e*) Pauſan. lib. 6. cap. 2.

Philoſopher, and let the world judge of their importance.

Before he concludes this remark, our Philoſopher delivers his opinion as to the poſſibility of proving the reality of *Chriſt*'s body after the reſurrection. Is it then poſſible? "No, (ſays the Gentleman) "that's impoſſible. Every real miracle is an abſur- "dity to common ſenſe and underſtanding, and "contrary to the attributes of God; becauſe it "breaks down the bounderies and laws of nature, "which are the only rules of truth and certainty "to mankind (*f*)." It ſeems ſurpriſing how a man of this opinion, has given himſelf ſo much needleſs trouble in finding out abſurdities, inconſiſtencies, and contradictions, in the hiſtory of the reſurrection, when, in ſo compendious a manner, only by ſhewing, that "every real miracle is an abſurdity "to common ſenſe, and contrary to the attributes "of God," he might have all at once overturned the whole ſtructure of ſupernatural revelation. I confeſs, that, towards the end of his book, in a ſtrange jumble of ranting ſtuff, that ſhews the confuſion and perplexity of a labouring brain, he pretends to make out ſomething of this nature. But, as I am not able to comprehend, how a man can hold the natural impoſſibility of a miracle, without, at the ſame time, avowing the atheiſtical philoſophy of *Spinoſa*; ſo I muſt beg leave to ſay, that however the Gentleman may intend them, he uſes ſome expreſſions that ſeem plainly to bear the ſentiments of that philoſophy. Thus, among other things, he tells us, "a power to work miracles, is a power ſuperior "to the univerſal laws, by which the ſyſtem of "things are governed. This, (ſays he) is the "power

(*f*) P. 52.

" power of imagination only, and contrary to the " attributes of God; to that which is the moſt " clear of all others, his unchangeableneſs. The " ſame cauſes muſt always produce the ſame ef- " fects (*g*)." Is it then in our imagination only, that that infinite mind has an exiſtence, whoſe almighty power, in the creation of the world, having eſtabliſhed the univerſal laws, by which the ſyſtems of things are governed, muſt be conceived ſtill ſuperior to thoſe laws? Again we are told, " whe- " ther the divine, human, and mundane nature, " be mutable or immutable, there is no occaſion for " the interpoſition of any miraculous power; be- " cauſe, if they change, they all change together, " whereby THE WHOLE comes under a new " ſyſtem of univerſal laws, not in any particular " inſtances to be altered or controled. And thus, " it happening upon every change that can be ſup- " poſed, as there is no occaſion, ſo there can be no " interpoſition of any miraculous power. But if the " divine, human, and mundane nature, be immu- " table, (which implies, there is no power in THE " WHOLE ſuperior to, or able to control the " univerſal laws, whereby things are governed,) as " things begin, ſo they muſt neceſſarily go on; no " miracles at firſt, no miracles can ever happen; " but once miracles, always miracles; for the ſame " cauſes muſt always produce the ſame effects: So " that, if miracles were ever neceſſary, they muſt " be always neceſſary; or if God ever wrought " miracles, as the proof of the revelation of his " will, he will always purſue the ſame method (*h*)." This, in my apprehenſion, is our Philoſpher's reaſoning. And is there then ſo neceſſary a dependence

(*g*) P. 78. (*h*) P. 79, 80.

dence of the divine, human, and mundane nature, one upon another, that we cannot conceive the divine nature to have had an exiſtence, before this preſent complexion of things? Or, ſuppoſing the human and mundane nature to come to be extinguiſhed, (for what has had a beginning, may come to an end) muſt we at the ſame time likewiſe ſuppoſe the utter extinction of the divine nature? "If they change (ſays our Philoſopher) they all "change together." In ſhort, Is the divine, human, and mundane nature, in ſuch a ſituation, and ſo linked together, that all of them are equally involved in "the ſame abſolute fatal neceſſity? Once "miracles always miracles; the ſame cauſes muſt "always produce the ſame effects." Indeed I cannot clear our Philoſopher from being a Diſciple of *Spinoſa*. And, to be ſure, in his Maſter's ſcheme of philoſophy, a miracle is the abſurdeſt thing in nature, a thing in itſelf abſolutely inconſiſtent, and ſtrictly impoſſible. Behold then the grand undertaker! wondrouſly well qualified, "to ſhew man-"kind the ſtupid nature of bigotry, to hold forth "the acceptable light of truth, to recover the dig-"nity of virtue, and to promote that veneration "for wiſdom and truth, which has been debaſed "and degraded by faith (*i*)." In place of the doctrines of Chriſtianity, he ſubſtitutes the principles of *Spinoſa!*

Let us now conſider what the Gentleman obſerves, *4thly*, as to the other appearances mentioned by St. *John* and St. *Paul*. And here he declares himſelf with great conciſeneſs.

"St. *John* (ſays he) tells us of more appearances "of *Jeſus* to his Diſciples, than the other Evange-"liſts

(*i*) P. 72.

" liſts do, and after they ſay he aſcended, or took " his laſt leave of them; it is ſufficient therefore to " ſay of St. *John*'s evidence, that his deſtroys theirs, " or theirs deſtroy his (*k*)." And as the other Evangeliſts, who relate, each of them, only one particular appearance of *Jeſus* to his Apoſtles, do mention not one ſingle word, or give not the moſt diſtant hint, of its being the only one, or the firſt and laſt, at which *Jeſus* aſcended, or took his laſt leave of them; and I have made it clearly out, that it cannot poſſibly be ſo underſtood, but that other appearances muſt undoubtedly have happened; it is ſufficient here to ſay, in anſwer to our Philoſopher, that St. *John*'s evidence is altogether conſiſtent with that of the other Evangeliſts; and, to a man who underſtands the nature of hiſtory, there is not the fainteſt ſhadow of diſagreement among them. Of ſuch ſort are the contradictions charged upon the Evangeliſts, that all Hiſtorians, from the beginning of time to the end thereof, treating of the ſame ſubject, muſt unavoidably be guilty of them, and thereby, in our Philoſopher's account, mutually deſtroy each other's evidence; whereof I have above given ſome inſtances. So that whatever credit our Philoſopher may have otherwiſe acquired, he has certainly the honour of having invented a ſpunge for all hiſtory.

As for St. *Paul*'s evidence, this too the Gentleman very ſoon diſpatches. After expoſing his wit, and repeating his old blunder in the caſe of the two Diſciples; he comes to tell us, " as St. *Paul* ſaw " *Jeſus* only in a viſion, he ſeems to be in his vi- " ſions about his relation of *Jeſus*'s appearances (*l*)." And muſt this impertinent reflection, amidſt a little more ſuch pitiful raillery, blaſt the reputation of St. *Paul*,

(*k*) P. 53. (*l*) Ibid.

Paul, and invalidate his credit among mankind? The man is visionary beyond measure that can think so. Our Philosopher ought to keep his vanity within narrower bounds, and not affront the world in imagining, that his authority, or a little piece of his ill-grounded ridicule, must overbear and finally conclude the public judgment. St. *Paul* agrees with the rest, as the rest agree with one another. And among the rest there is all the agreement that can be expected, or that can be found among Historians of the best reputation: And, after the same manner, does St. *Paul* agree with all the New Testament Writers. "But the 500 brethren (he says) *Christ* "appeared to, are all lumped together, and might "as easily have been made 5000, and as hard to "prove or disprove the one as the other." And just so, the 2000 horse with which, *Livy* tells us, *Hannibal* marched to reconnoitre the city of *Rome*, are all lumped together, and might as easily have been made 4000, and as hard to prove or disprove the one as the other. Did ever moral Philosopher bless the world with such curious and instructive reflections? What now shall become of the defenders of revelation? The cause of infidelity must triumph in the hands of this philosophic Gentleman. Only it is great pity that his excess of modesty has prevented his trusting wholly to his clear and conclusive reasoning, and tempted him to admit the monstruous spirit of buffoonry, that overpowers and disgraces his moral philosophy, and presumes, at every turn, to help him out in his argument.

The *5th* and *last* point proposed by the Gentleman to be considered, is the ascension of *Jesus*, concerning which we are told, they also disagree, or contradict one another. And this disagreement, or contradiction

contradiction he pretends to make out in this manner:

"St. *Mark*, (ſays he) and St. *Luke* acquaint us, "that, after *Jeſus* appeared to the eleven as they "ſat at meat, and had ſpoken to them, he aſcended "into heaven. St. *Luke* ſays, and with him the "Author of the *Acts* ſeems to agree, that the place "of his aſcenſion was *Bethany*. So that if St. *Mark* "means *Galilee*, he contradicts theſe. If he means "the ſame place as theſe do, he contradicts himſelf; "for he ſays the Angel, or young man, told them "*Jeſus* was gone before the Diſciples into *Galilee*, "and there they ſhould ſee him.—— St. *Matthew*, "St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke*, mention this appearance "of *Jeſus* to his Apoſtles, as the firſt and laſt "time; St. *John* and St. *Paul* ſay, it was not the "laſt.——St. *Matthew* and St. *John*, who were "two of the Apoſtles, and therefore ſhould be "thoſe that ſaw his aſcenſion, ſeem to ſay, that he "never aſcended; at leaſt they mention nothing of "it. And, according to them, it is a queſtion, "whether he is gone yet (*m*)." This is our Philoſopher's objection; and it is apparent, that the whole ſtreſs of it lies upon his alledging, that as *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, do each of them mention only one appearance, ſo each of them means the firſt and laſt, or the only appearance of *Jeſus* to his Apoſtles. But none of theſe Evangeliſts having in the leaſt inſinuated any thing of that nature, but quite the contrary, the only reaſon whereby our Philoſopher can pretend to juſtify his opinion, is their being barely ſilent as to any other appearance, which, I have often obſerved, cannot poſſibly avail him. This, however, is what in every inſtance he

(*m*) P. 54, 55.

ſeems wholly to reſt upon. Only in the preſent caſe, with reſpect to *Matthew* and *John*, who do not expreſsly relate the aſcenſion after the reſurrection, though in the body of their hiſtory they openly avow it, and St. *John* in particular frequently mentions it very pointedly, he abates ſomething of his confidence, and is not quite ſo poſitive, that their ſilence is an argument againſt the aſcenſion, or that therein they contradict the other Hiſtorians who report it; "They ſeem, (ſays he) to ſay, that *Jeſus* never "aſcended; at leaſt they mention nothing of it." And how could they poſſibly ſay, or ſeem to ſay, that *Jeſus* never aſcended, when they mention nothing of that event? As therefore our Philoſopher ſeems here to allow, that the ſilence of *Matthew* and *John*, as to the aſcenſion of *Jeſus*, is no argument againſt the truth of that event, and can be held no contradiction to the report of other Hiſtorians who relate it; ſo, if he condeſcends to be conſiſtent with himſelf, he muſt likewiſe allow, that the bare ſilence of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, who mention each of them only one appearance of *Jeſus* to his Apoſtles, is no argument againſt the truth of his having made more appearances, and can be held no contradiction to the report of other Hiſtorians who relate them. But having already ſufficiently explained this article, I ſhall here briefly examine, whether, betwixt the firſt appearance of *Jeſus* to his Apoſtles, and his aſcenſion which St. *Luke* and St. *Mark* ſeem to connect immediately together, one has good reaſon to reſt aſſured, that ſeveral other events muſt have interveened.

In general, I muſt again obſerve, nothing can be more certain, than that an Hiſtorian's barely connecting two events immediately together, is no proof, no ſort of evidence, that betwixt theſe two

events

events there happened no intermediate ones. Whether any ſuch happened, muſt be determined from the nature and circumſtances of things, and from the accounts we have from other Hiſtorians. And conſidering the circumſtances of this appearance mentioned by St. *Luke*, which was the firſt ſight the Apoſtles had of *Jeſus* after his reſurrection, it cannot poſſibly be underſtood to be the laſt. Our Philoſopher agrees, that this appearance is the ſame with the firſt of thoſe related by St. *John*, who tells us it happened in the evening, or at night; and how far the night muſt have been ſpent, before this appearance could be concluded, one may learn, or reaſonably conjecture, from St. *Luke*. His ſtory is this:

Againſt the time that the two Diſciples, with *Jeſus* in their company, reached *Emmaus*, the day was far ſpent, and it was towards evening. Upon their importunity our bleſſed Saviour condeſcending to go with them into the houſe where they ſeem to have propoſed to lodge that night, ſome time muſt have paſſed, and very probably it was now night or ſupper-time, againſt ſomething to eat was prepared for them. While they were in the houſe, no doubt, the ſubject of their converſation by the way was renewed; and, as they ſat at table, *Jeſus* having been pleaſed to make himſelf known to them, 'tis reaſonable to conceive, as I have above explained this paſſage, that he continued with them till ſupper was ended, or the repaſt was over: And thus the evening was far advanced, or it muſt have been a good deal later. After the two Diſciples had come to the knowledge of *Jeſus*, and *Jeſus* had withdrawn from them, they roſe up the ſame hour and returned to *Jeruſalem*; and againſt the time they came to town, having walked more than ſeven miles, it muſt have been

been ſtill farther on in the night. And ſuppoſing, that ſo ſoon as they arrived, they repaired directly to where the Apoſtles were aſſembled; as they found them diſcourſing about an appearance of *Jeſus* to *Peter*, no doubt, they gladly had the patience to hear the circumſtances of that appearance, and then they told the company what things had happened in the way to *Emmaus*, and how *he was known of them in breaking of bread*; all which muſt have conſumed ſome conſiderable time. In the interim, as they are relating thoſe events, *Jeſus* himſelf coming into the room, appears to them; upon which, they being terrified and affrighted, he compoſes their minds; he ſhews them the marks whereby they could not but diſtinguiſh him; and having given them all poſſible proofs of the reality of his body, and that he had moſt certainly returned to life again; he expounds to them the Scriptures, and from thence convinces them, that thus it behoved *Chriſt* to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day: In concluſion, he lets them know, how they were to be employed in the world, namely, *that repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at* Jeruſalem. *And ye*, ſays our Lord, *are witneſſes of theſe things.* Now, as all theſe particulars, properly explained, as undoubtedly they were, could not paſs in a moment, or in a few minutes, but neceſſarily required ſeveral hours; of neceſſity one muſt apprehend, that by this time it was late, or pretty far in the night. Thus ſtands the ſtory of this appearance. How then is it poſſible to imagine, that, after all this, when the night was ſo far ſpent, Jeſus *led them out as far as to* Bethany, *a Sabbath-day's journey*, or at the diſtance of more than a mile, *and was there parted from them, and carried up into heaven?* Would not this repreſent the aſcenſion to

have

have happened at a time of night, when people ſhould not be well able to diſtinguiſh the neareſt objects, or one face from another, far leſs to *look ſtedfaſtly toward heaven, and to behold him as he went up, till a cloud received him out of their ſight*; expreſſions, that import people's gazing up into heaven in broad day-light? Let our Philoſopher be as confident as he will, that the hiſtory of the reſurrection and aſcenſion, is all forgery; if he will allow the contrivers to have had common ſenſe, and impoſtors are not commonly deſtitute of this quality, I can appeal to himſelf, whether he really thinks, that immediately upon relating this appearance of *Jeſus*, which happened at ſupper-time, *Luke* would have hurried on, and concluded it with a midnight aſcenſion, when no body ſhould be able to witneſs it? As *Luke* is ſuppoſed to have had the whole at his own framing; beyond all queſtion, he would have made his ſtory a little more feaſible, and not told us a tale ſo very fooliſh and abſurd, that no man of common ſenſe can be thought capable of inventing it. In attending, therefore, to the circumſtances of this appearance, (even ſuppoſing *Luke* an impoſtor, as our Philoſopher would have him) one cannot but reſt confident, that this could not poſſibly be the laſt appearance of *Jeſus*, to his Apoſtles, at which he aſcended.

Nor will the circumſtances of the Apoſtles ſuffer us to conceive, that *Jeſus*, after his reſurrection, met his Apoſtles only once, and that, at this meeting, he took his laſt leave of them, and went up into heaven. From St. *Luke* himſelf we underſtand, that the Apoſtles had the ſtrongeſt prejudices againſt the reſurrection of *Jeſus*, and could not believe the reports of their Fellow-diſciples, that would have led them to apprehend he was riſen. And yet theſe very

men

men were to be employed in preaching repentance and remiſſion of ſins in the name of *Jeſus*, among all nations beginning at *Jeruſalem*; and, at the hazard of their lives, to teſtify to the world, that Jeſus *was riſen from the dead, and had aſcended into heaven.* And to thoſe men, thus prejudiced, and thus to be employed, is it to be imagined, that *Jeſus* appeared only once, and that too, ſo late as when they were at ſupper; and, having diſcourſed with them for ſome time, immediately let them out as far as to *Bethany*, and there, *all things covered in darkneſs*, left them and went up into heaven? That things were tranſacted in ſo great a hurry, and in ſuch unfitting circumſtances, is beyond all probability; no man can believe it. The Apoſtles, indeed, at the firſt appearance of *Jeſus*, might be ſatisfied of the truth of his reſurrection. But, conſidering human nature, had they ſeen *Jeſus* only once, the impreſſions they had received of the certainty of this event, might ſoon come to wear off, and their old prejudices return and prevail; nor could the hurrying them away ſo late that ſame night to *Bethany*, have at all helped them to retain their conviction. From the nature of things one muſt neceſſarily apprehend, that, to prepare the Apoſtles for being witneſſes of the truth of the reſurrection, *Jeſus* muſt have appeared to them ſeveral times, till all their prejudices ſhould be quite extinguiſhed, and their conviction ſo firmly rooted in their minds, as to enable them to out-brave all dangers. Thus, from the nature and circumſtances of things, which way ſoever they are taken, it is mighty evident, that this appearance of *Jeſus* to his Apoſtles, mentioned by St. *Luke*, can at no rate be underſtood to be the laſt: And I need not obſerve, that all the other Evangeliſts

lists plainly intimate, and St. *John* in particular expressly relates several other appearances.

Indeed, when St. *Luke* enters upon his account of the first appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles, he goes on in a continued narration, all along connecting one thing with another, till he comes to his account of the ascension, without taking notice of any one intermediate appearance. And from hence, no doubt, a heedless and unskilful Reader, may be apt to apprehend, that this was the first and last, or the only appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles. But, can so rash and ill-formed a conceit enter into the head of a man, who sets up to examine history, a moral Philosopher too, who pretends to bring the world from darkness to light, to remove all the false colouring of bigotry and delusion, with which Priests and impostors have disguised things, and to represent truth in its own native beauties? In relating this article of his history, St. *Luke* follows no course, but what is universally observed by all Historians whatsoever, they claim it as their common privilege, an undeniable branch of their liberty. As for St. *Mark*, it is obvious he does not connect together the first appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles, and his ascension, in so strict a manner as St. *Luke* seems to do, but rather representing these two events as distinct or separate articles, he mentions the one immediately after the other, without taking notice of any intermediate appearance; and yet we know from St. *Mark* himself, as well as from other Historians, that, after the first appearance of *Jesus* at *Jerusalem*, the Apostles must have seen him in *Galilee*. Thus *Polybius* having informed us, that *Scipio* overthrew *Indibilis*, without mentioning any intermediate event, he immediately tells us, that *Scipio* came to *Arragon*: And

And yet we know from *Livy*, that, betwixt the defeat of *Indibilis*, and *Scipio*'s coming to *Arragon*, ſeveral events interveened, particularly *Scipio*'s undertaking a long march, in order to have an interview with *Maſaniſſa*. So that St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke*, in connecting theſe two diſtant events, the firſt appearance of *Jeſus* and his aſcenſion, immediately with one another, have done nothing but what all other Hiſtorians uſe to do. And our Philoſopher may ſee, if his eyes are not ſtill holden, that this manner of connecting theſe two events, is a ſhadow of reaſon, only for a thoughtleſs man, who little underſtands the nature of hiſtory, and the circumſtances of things, to conclude, that this was the firſt and laſt, or the only appearance of *Jeſus* to his Apoſtles.

But although St. *Luke* does not diſtinguiſh that ſpace of time, that lies betwixt the firſt appearance of *Jeſus* and his aſcenſion, into diſtinct periods, according as he made his ſeveral appearances to his Apoſtles, but takes the whole in one view, and when he begins with the firſt appearance of *Jeſus*, goes on till he comes to his aſcenſion; yet he ſeems to relate ſome articles, which a Philoſopher, from the nature of things, and all circumſtances conſidered, cannot but judge muſt have paſſed at ſome other appearance. Thus he tells us, that *Jeſus* ſpoke in this manner to his Apoſtles: *And behold*, ſays our Lord, *I ſend the promiſe of my Father upon you. But tarry ye in the city of* Jeruſalem, *until ye be endowed with power from on high.* Now, as the firſt appearance of *Jeſus*, with which St. *Luke* begins his narration, was moſt certainly at *Jeruſalem*; and as St. *Mark* intimates an appearance of *Jeſus* in *Galilee*; and we learn from St. *John*, that *Jeſus* appeared to ſeven Diſciples, at the ſea of *Tiberias*; and St. *Matthew* expreſsly

expressly tells us, that the Apostles *went away into* Galilee, *into a mountain, where* Jesus *had appointed them, and there they saw him*; I say, as the first appearance of *Jesus* was most certainly at *Jerusalem*, and we understand from *Mark*, *John*, and *Matthew*, that *Jesus* afterwards appeared to his Disciples in *Galilee*; it cannot well be imagined, that this charge of tarrying in the city of *Jerusalem* was given to his Apostles at his first appearance. It is true, the Gentleman's philosophy here enables him to alledge, that herein St. *Luke* contradicts the other Evangelists: "St. *Matthew* (says he) and St. *Mark* say, "the Disciples were ordered to go to *Galilee*; St. "*Luke*, and the Author of the *Acts* say, that they "were ordered to stay at *Jerusalem*: St. *Matthew* "says, *Jesus* met the Disciples for the first and last "time, at a mountain in *Galilee*; St. *Luke*, that it "was at *Jerusalem* (*n*)." And, I confess, had any of these Historians made this appearance of *Jesus* at *Jerusalem* or in *Galilee*, his first and last, or his only one to his Apostles, this objection would have been well founded. But, as I have already shewn (without mentioning the positive evidence of the other New Testament Writers) with what folly and absurdity our Philosopher pretends, from *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, that *Jesus* appeared only once to his Apostles: Since that the giving of this command to stay at *Jerusalem*, does not consist with the first appearance of *Jesus*, (for had it been then given, they could not have gone into *Galilee*). It must unquestionably have happened at some other appearance. And the appearance at which, it is highly probable, it happened, was either that in *Galilee*, at the mountain where *Jesus* had appointed them; or, that in *Jerusalem*, where *Jesus* seems to have assembled

(*n*) P. 55.

ſembled his Diſciples before he led them out to *Bethany*, in order to witneſs his aſcenſion. Nor is this conduct of St. *Luke*, in connecting together, under one head, ſeveral articles that lie at a diſtance from one another, as they happened upon ſeveral occaſions, any uncommon thing with Hiſtorians. *Suetonius* acquaints us, that three ſeveral times *Vitellius* appeared in public, offering to reſign the government; and tells us, what he ſaid upon each of thoſe occaſions. But *Tacitus* mentions only one of thoſe public appearances, and under that one brings together what was ſaid at each of them, reporting at the ſame time ſeveral particulars not taken notice of by *Suetonius*. And I may here venture to ſay, that the man, though a moral Philoſopher, would be laughed at in the world, who, in order to diſcredit that piece of hiſtory, ſhould alledge, that therein *Tacitus* and *Suetonius* contradict one another; *Suetonius* ſays, *Vitellius* appeared three times in public, offering to reſign the government; *Tacitus* ſays, that he appeared only once.

Thus far I have conſidered this moral Philoſopher's objections. And I would fain hope the Reader is fully ſatisfied, that without all foundation, and in open defiance againſt the ſtrongeſt evidences to the contrary, he charges the hiſtory of the reſurrection and aſcenſion of *Jeſus*, with inconſiſtencies, improbabilities, abſurdities, and contradictions. Every ſober man muſt be ſenſible, that this bold, furious charge only proves a wildneſs of imagination, and that the Gentleman's prejudices have acquired the ſtrength "To remove mountains, and to ſwallow "them up, as if they were caſt into the ſea (*o*)." He may talk what he will of the Chriſtian faith; his Infidel faith, if I may ſpeak ſo, is a little more miraculous

(*o*) P. 57.

miraculous and wonderful; it can obſtinately believe things the moſt fooliſh and extravagant, that have no foundation either in reaſon or revelation. I know not what was our Philoſopher's religious education; but, I am confident, it was not his examining into the truth of the Goſpel hiſtory, that firſt made him an Infidel Some fooliſh perſon has told him, that the Chriſtian inſtitution is a cheat; this he was ſo credulous as to believe, and this belief he takes upon him to juſtify and recommend to the world, by the fooliſh things he has publiſhed. I ſhall conclude with an account of the appearances of *Jeſus* after his reſurrection, in the order wherein I apprehend they happened.

On the morning of the reſurrection, *Jeſus* appeared to *Mary Magdalene*, and ſent her to acquaint his Diſciples, that he had returned to life, and that he was to aſcend to the Father, but that he would firſt go into *Galilee*, and there they ſhould ſee him. This appearance is related by St. *Matthew*, St. *Mark*, and St. *John*; and it ſeems deſigned to inſpire the Apoſtles with the hopes of ſeeing *Jeſus* alive from the dead, and to prepare them to meet him without any diſcompoſure, or diſtraction of thought.—That ſame day, as two of his Diſciples were going to *Emmaus*, *Jeſus* came up with them, and entering into converſation upon the late event of his crucifixion, without diſcovering himſelf, he expounds to them the Scriptures, and from thence ſatisfies them, that Chriſt *ought to have ſuffered thoſe things, and to enter into his glory*. Whilſt they were thus diſcourſing, having arrived at the village, *Jeſus* goes with them into the houſe where they propoſed to lodge, and after he had made himſelf known to them as they ſat at meat, he left them. Upon which the two Diſciples roſe up that ſame hour, and returned to *Jeruſalem*,

ſalem, where they told the Eleven, and them that were with them, *what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.* This appearance is reported by St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke*. And as thoſe two Diſciples muſt have informed the Apoſtles, of the meaning of thoſe Scriptures relating to the *Meſſiah*, as *Jeſus* had expounded them; this ſeems to have been deſigned to give the Apoſtles an opportunity of attending to the real ſenſe of thoſe Scriptures, without being diſturbed or over-awed by the preſence and authority of *Jeſus*; that coming thus, in cool reaſoning, to perceive the fitneſs of thoſe events which had happened, they might, with greater compoſure of mind, when *Jeſus* ſhould appear among them, examine the reality of his appearance, and receive his inſtructions to better advantage. Theſe two appearances, therefore, ſeem to have been deſigned as preparatory to the Apoſtles.——Whether it happened before or after this appearance to the two Diſciples, cannot be determined; but the ſame day, *Jeſus* likewiſe appeared to *Simon Peter*. This appearance is plainly enough expreſſed by St. *Luke*; and is particularly related by St. *Paul*. And, as *Peter* ſeems to have been a man of a bold, forward temper, poſſibly, it was the deſign of this appearance, to prevent any diſagreeable or unbecoming effects which his forwardneſs might occaſion, in the firſt tranſports of his ſeeing *Jeſus*, and which would have greatly diſcompoſed the other Diſciples.——On the evening of the ſame day, before the diſcourſe introduced by the two Diſciples, who had been at *Emmaus*, was over, *Jeſus* appears *to the Eleven, and thoſe that were with them*, and affords them full conviction of the truth of his reſurrection, letting them know, that all thoſe events wherein he was concerned, had been foretold of

their

their *Messiah* in the Scriptures. This appearance is related by *Mark*, *Luke*, *John*, and *Paul*.——After eight days, *Jesus* appears again to his Apostles, and as St. *Thomas* had not been present at the former appearance, and would not believe the report of the other Disciples, *Jesus* calls upon him in particular to satisfy himself fully, and to receive conviction from his own senses. This appearance is mentioned by St. *John*. All these appearances, except that to the two Disciples at *Emmaus*, happened at *Jerusalem*.—Again, *Jesus* appeared to seven of his Disciples at the sea of *Tiberias*; whither they seem to have gone, in order to attend the meeting that was appointed at a mountain there in *Galilee*: This appearance is reported likewise by St. *John*.——The Disciples having now come into *Galilee*, *Jesus* appears to them at the mountain, where he had appointed them. And here, it is highly probable, *he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once*. So that this appearance is related by St. *Matthew* and St. *Paul*, and intimated by St. *Mark*.——After this, St. *Paul* tells us, he was seen of *James*. And, as I take this *James* to be the brother of *John*, it may reasonably be supposed, that our Saviour foreseeing that, within a few years, this Apostle should be cut off by *Herod*, he might be pleased thus to distinguish him, in order to encourage and support him, when he should come to suffer for his sake.——The last appearance of *Jesus* to his Disciples, was on the day of his ascension, when he led them out from *Jerusalem* as far as to *Bethany*, and was from thence, in their view, carried up into heaven. This appearance is reported by St. *Mark*, and by St. *Luke* in his Gospel, and in the *Acts of the Apostles*; and to this appearance St. *Paul* seems to refer, when he

tells

tells us, that *Jesus* was seen *of all the Apostles* (*p*); for under this designation were comprehended a great many other Disciples, besides the Twelve, mentioned in the 5th verse.

This is the order, wherein the history of the appearances of *Jesus*, after his resurrection, directs one to apprehend them. And they are all consistent one with another, without the least shadow of contradiction. I have above fully explained of what nature those contradictions are, which our Philosopher has found out in the Gospel-history. And I leave with the Reader this one other instance, which the Gentleman's joke upon the passage just now mentioned from St. *Paul*, gives me occasion to observe; and which still shews our Philosopher's disposition, and how unfit he is for serious argument. "St. "*Luke* (says he) acquaints us, that this appearance "was to the eleven Apostles; St. *John*, that 'twas "only to ten of them; St. *Paul* says, 'twas to the "twelve; perhaps, he had forgot that one of them "was fallen asleep (*q*)." And thus, these Historians must be held to contradict one another. St. *Luke* indeed calls them the Eleven, expressing the precise number to which the college of the Apostles happened then to be reduced; and herein, I suppose, he reports nothing but what is strictly true. In St. *John*, there is not a single word expressing the number Ten; so far from it, that as out of all his Disciples *Jesus* had made choice of a certain number as his immediate servants, to be next his person, and constantly to attend him, and those from their number, were commonly called *the Twelve*; so, notwithstanding the death of *Judas*, whose place came soon to be supplied, St. *John* continues to distinguish them

(*p*) 1 Cor. xv. 4.—7. (*q*) P. 55.

them by the common appellation, and calls them *the Twelve*; *But Thomas*, says he, *one of the Twelve, called* Didymus *was not with them when* Jesus *came.* And the man is ludicrous indeed, who can find out a joke in St. *Paul*'s using the same stile. I would gladly know, when a particular body or college of men are denominated from their number, and go by the name of *the Ten*, or *the Twelve*, or *the Fifteen*, can our Philosopher shew, there is any impropriety, not to speak of falshood, in continuing to call them by that name taken from their number, even when their number, upon some occasions, by death or absence, happens not to be full? To make such things the ground upon which to charge any history in the world with contradictions and absurdities, serves only to proclaim either the ignorance or the malice of the accuser.

After what manner, in other instances, our Philosopher is affected, I know not; but in this argument he seems greatly given to wondering; pag. 37 and 38. he brings together half a dozen of his wonders: And, as I have already explained five of them, I shall here take some little notice of the one that remains, that the Reader may leave this subject in perceiving what sort of things astonish our Philosopher, and appear to him "amazingly "acted; a resurrection in the dark, seen neither "by friends, foes, nor indifferent spectators!" This amazes the Gentleman. He is amazed, not surely that *Jesus* arose without there being any light in the sepulchre, as if that had been necessary to warm and animate the dead body, or to shew *Jesus* his way out of the tomb. Nor can it be, that to help him out of the grave, he had need of the assistance either of friends, or foes, or indifferent persons. What then amazes our Philosopher? 'Tis

precisely

precisely this: Neither friend, nor foe, nor indifferent person, was present in the sepulchre to see the dead body return to life again. And how could they? The sepulchre was sealed and guarded. The Gentleman is astonished, when every body else is quite composed and unmoved. "No body saw the "first symptoms of returning life, and the dead "body rising up again!" Does our Philosopher mean this as an argument against the truth of the resurrection of *Jesus? Dorcas* died.—Her friends lamented her.—And because they were not present in the upper-chamber with St. *Peter*, when he called her back to life again; would this have been ground enough for them to have denied, she had returned from the dead, when he presented her to them alive (*r*)? But is it not amazing, "That an "Angel should impolitickly frighten away the "watch before *Jesus* came out of the sepulchre, so "that they could be no witnesses of his resurrecti-"on, who would have been the most proper per-"sons!" Mighty proper witnesses indeed, who were capable of being bribed to publish a lie: No such characters are employed to attest the truth of the resurrection of *Jesus*. But, as the Gentleman reckons, that the testimony of the watch would have been of such consequence, as to have put the matter beyond doubt, need I tell him what they witnessed to the chief Priests and Pharisees? In face of the *Jewish* Council, they openly declare, that whilst they were upon guard at the sepulchre, about such an hour in the morning, *there was a great earthquake*; that *they saw a man descending from heaven, who came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it*; that *his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as*

(*r*) Act. 9. 36. &c.

as ſnow, and that for fear of him they had fled. This is the watchmen's evidence. What does it mean;——What do the chief Prieſts underſtand by it? Upon this report, no doubt, they ſearched the ſepulchre, and finding the body gone, did this evidence of the ſoldiers alarm them with no apprehenſions of a reſurrection? Or, did they think there was ſo little in it, that its coming abroad could have no influence to induce the world to believe that *Jeſus* was riſen? Their bribing the ſoldiers to ſuppreſs it, and to publiſh a lie, is a demonſtration to the contrary. Here then are our Philoſopher's "moſt "proper perſons, more than half a dozen watch-"men, better than a dozen Apoſtles (*s*)," giving their evidence, though they ſaw not *Jeſus* himſelf in favour, I muſt ſay, of his reſurrection. But our Philoſopher ſtands yet amazed: "An Angel impo-"liticly frightening away the watch before *Jeſus* "came out of the ſepulchre!" But what had *Jeſus* to do with thoſe people? It would have diſgraced the cauſe to have employed ſuch characters to witneſs in it. And this, I am confident, would have been our Philoſopher's argument, had the truth of the reſurrection in any degree reſted upon their evidence. Nothing therefore can ſhew better policy, than the Angel's chaſing away thoſe infamous Gentlemen. What they ſaw and felt at the ſepulchre reported to the Council of the *Jews*, was ſome ſtrong evidence to the chief Prieſts of their own procuring; and if it did not thoroughly convince them, it moſt certainly alarmed and confounded them, and, when they came to cool a little, ſerved, I doubt not, to diſpoſe them to liſten to *Gamaliel*'s propoſition, *Refrain from theſe men, and let them alone: For if this counſel or this work be of*

(*s*) P. 64.

men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; leſt happily ye be found even to fight againſt God. And to him they agreed (*t*).

Thus, I hope, I have ſaid ſomething towards compoſing our Philoſopher's mind, and carrying off his amazement. And, in order to ſecure his inward quiet, let him conſider further; had *Jeſus*, before the Angel diſmiſſed the guard, come out of the ſepulchre, he muſt have fallen into the hands of the ſoldiers, who would have either immediately cut him off, or led him away priſoner to the Rulers of the *Jews*. It is true, he might have ſaved himſelf by a miracle. But why appear, and be put to ſave himſelf in this manner, when his own proper guards, the Angels, were able to protect him, both from the violence of their hands, and the diſcredit of their teſtimony? Nay, ſuppoſing the ſoldiers to have had it in their power to have reported, *they had ſeized* Jeſus *coming out of the ſepulchre, but that he having miraculouſly eſcaped, they know not what is become of him*; does the Gentleman imagine, that this report would have had any better effect, in the caſe of the chief Prieſts, than the report they made of an earthquake and an Angel? Was it not then infinitely preferable, before *Jeſus* ſhould come out of the ſepulchre, that an Angel ſhould diſcharge the watch, and ſend away thoſe rude perfidious men, who had ſo barbarouſly mocked and inſulted the bleſſed *Jeſus* when in their power, and came afterwards to ſell their conſcience for a piece of money? I confeſs, the introducing Angels into the hiſtory of the reſurrection, gives occaſion to our Philoſopher to propound a great many impertinent ſcoffing queſtions (*u*). But if he believes there are Angels, and that God

(*t*) Acts v. 18. (*u*) P. 66.

God makes uſe of their miniſtry in the affairs of his Providence; where could they be more properly employed, than in attending the reſurrection of his Son? Angels coming down from heaven, and aſſiſting in this grand event, ſhews the intercourſe that *Jeſus* had with the Father, it clears and brightens his character, and ſupports all his pretenſions, the whole of his conduct, by the divine approbation. And the watchmen's reporting what they ſaw and felt at the ſepulchre, was not this a loud call to the chief Prieſts and Phariſees to moderate their paſſions, and to inquire into the matter with care and attention? This indeed they might reſiſt, but it could not fail to awaken in their minds ſome violent ſuſpicions, that this work might be of God, and they ſhould not be able to overthrow it.

Thus the Reader ſees, what ſort of contradictions our Philoſopher has found out in the Goſpel-hiſtory, and what ſort of wonders ſurpriſe him, and raiſe his amazement. His contradictions and his wonders are all ſeated in his own imagination, and have no where elſe any ſort of exiſtence. So that the authenticity of the Goſpel-hiſtory is yet intire, ſtill ſtanding firm and unſhaken.

But, as a very important branch of this hiſtory is made up of miraculous events, and ſome people are of opinion, that a miracle is a thing, either in itſelf impoſſible, or not capable of being aſcertained by human teſtimony, or to whoſe exiſtence the uniform experience of mankind is directly oppoſite, whereby they would make the New Teſtament a forged ſpurious compoſition, having no title to authentic hiſtory; I ſhall conſider the importance of thoſe ſentiments: And the Reader, I hope, will ſoon perceive, with what folly and weakneſs ſuch objections are urged,

urged, and at what an infinite distance they are from affecting the credit of the Gospel-history.

SECT. IV.

A Miracle is an Event in itself credible, a proper Object of human Belief; and no Objection against its Existence can be drawn from the Nature of the Fact, or the common Experience of Mankind.

THE Gentleman, whose sentiments I have used the freedom to examine in the former Section, is pleased openly to declare, that a miracle is a thing in itself impossible. Whether a later Writer, in his *Philosophical Essays concerning human Understanding*, carries the matter as far, one cannot so well understand: But he plainly talks of a thing utterly absurd and miraculous (*x*), and of the absolute impossibility or miraculous nature of events (*y*). From which sort of language, one is tempted to suspect, that a miracle, and a mere absurdity, and an absolute impossibility, are, in his apprehension, so many different words precisely of the same import. And yet he seems elsewhere to admit the possibility of miracles; for he cautions his Reader in this manner: "I beg (says he) the limitation here "made may be remarked, when I say, that a mi- "racle can never be proved, so as to be the foun- "dation of a system of religion. For I own, that "otherwise there may possibly be miracles, or vio- "lations of the usual course of nature, of such a "kind as to admit of proof from human testimo- "ny; tho' perhaps, it will be impossible to find "any

(*x*) Essay x. of Miracles, p. 184. (*y*) Ibid. p. 195.

" any ſuch in all the records of hiſtory. Thus, " ſuppoſe all Authors, in all languages, agree, that " from the firſt of *January* 1600, there was a total " darkneſs over the whole earth for eight days: " Suppoſe that the tradition of this extraordinary " event, is ſtill ſtrong and lively among the people: " That all travellers, who return from foreign " countries, bring us accounts of the ſame tradi- " tion, without the leaſt variation or contradiction; " it is evident, that our preſent Philoſophers, in- " ſtead of doubting of that fact, ought to receive it " for certain, and ought to ſearch for the cauſes, " whence it might be derived (z)." Thus the Gentleman will admit of miracles, upon his own terms. And I have tranſcribed this paſſage, in order to ſhew the Reader, what kind of miracles he judges capable of proof from human teſtimony, provided they are no foundation for a ſyſtem of religion.

It does not indeed greatly concern the argument, but I would beg leave here to obſerve, the Gentleman appears to me very unfortunate in the choice of his miracle, both as to the ſeaſon of its appearance, and the time of its duration: In both which articles, 'tis impoſſible, in the nature of things, but mankind, then living, muſt have greatly varied in their ſentiments, and contradicted one another. It is, certainly, in itſelf, ill-contrived and ridiculous. The Gentleman, therefore, had better ſave his invention, and leave it to Providence to determine, when, and where, and what ſort of miracles are moſt proper to be wrought for the benefit of mankind. Nor can I well underſtand, how, in the caſe of this miracle, as he has defined ſuch an event, he comes to talk

(z) Ibid. p. 199. Marg.

talk of Philoſophers their ſearching for the cauſes, whence it might be derived. So that, I ſay, I am ſtill at a loſs to know, whether he allows the poſſibility of miracles. However, as he goes upon that ſuppoſition, I ſhall preſume to follow him. And he begins his argument with a moſt important article of intelligence, giving us to underſtand, he has diſcovered an argument, which, he flatters himſelf, will at length ſettle the minds of mankind, thoſe of them, at leaſt, who are wiſe and learned; and put an end to all that ſtir and buſtle, that hitherto has been made about the Chriſtian Revelation.

"I flatter myſelf, (ſays he) that I have diſco-
" vered an argument, which, if juſt, will, with
" the wiſe and learned, be an everlaſting check
" to all kinds of ſuperſtitious deluſion; and conſe-
" quently, will be uſeful as long as the world endures.
" For ſo long, I preſume, will the accounts of mi-
" racles and prodigies be found in all profane hi-
" ſtory (*a*) :" And particularly, as the Gentleman moſt certainly means, in the Goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt*. From this introduction, ſome people may be apt to imagine, we are going to differ with a Gentleman not a little conceited of his own abilities. But, as Superſtition is a moſt unworthy miſrepreſentation of God, ſetting up in his room, an ill-natured, captious, and whimſical being; and, as it is an abject perplexing paſſion, always diſquieting to the human mind, and often productive of public confuſion and miſery; it is certainly a noble generous attempt, to deliver mankind from the dread and terror, from all the cruel oppreſſions of this home-bred capricious tyrant. I confeſs our Deliverer gives us no hint, whether, after his having thus relieved us from this gloomy

(*a*) P. 174.

gloomy thraldom, he means to assert us *into the liberty of the children of God, that, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.* Possibly, having brought us out of bondage, and made us masters of ourselves, he may be in some dread, that should we again mind religion, or submit to worship God in any shape, this would bring us again into bondage, again involve us in superstitious delusions. But, whatever be the reason of our not having his instructions as to the religion one may safely espouse and follow, after our deliverance from every sort and every degree of superstitious delusion, it must be acknowledged, the releasing mankind from the meanest and the most oppressive slavery, is an action highly meritorious. And indeed the Author may well be allowed to plume himself upon it. No one rival or partner has he to share with him in the glory. Of himself, purely by the strength of his own proper genius, he discovered this long-wanted argument, which will be a check, an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusions; and, as long as the world endures, ruin the credit of all miracles, and proclaim all former generations of men, *Heathen*, *Jew*, or *Christian*, silly dupes in believing them.

After all, as the merit of new inventions is sometimes found to consist in a little quackery; or as the eagerness of a man's passion, in opposition to superstitious delusions, may sometimes hurry him beyond the bounds of nature, and warping the judgment, bring forth an argument, in the Author, meer delusion, and upon the world, gross imposition (*b*). One must take

(*b*) The Gentleman's case may, perhaps, be described from Lord Shaftesbury, who tells us, that "Superstition itself is but "a

take the liberty fairly to examine this new invented argument, of which the Author makes ſo great a boaſt. But, before I enter into this examination, that the Reader may have an open view of the important queſtion now in hand, and be the better able to give judgment, I ſhall firſt, with all freedom, declare my ſentiments in relation to miracles, and the evidence upon which the actors or reporters of them may be counted worthy of credit; and endeavour to explain after what manner we may ſatisfy ourſelves as to the judgment and veracity of any Hiſtorian.

A miracle, then, is a ſenſible effect, produced either by the immediate power of God, or by the power of ſome inviſible Agent, under the direction or permiſſion of God, in ſuſpending or altering any particular law of nature in ſuch a particular inſtance, for

" a certain kind of fear, which poſſeſſing us ſtrongly with the " apprehended wrath or diſpleaſure of divine Powers, hinders us " from judging what thoſe Powers are in themſelves, or what " conduct of ours may, with beſt reaſon, be thought ſuitable to " ſuch highly rational and ſuperior natures. Now (continues " this noble Author) if, from the experience of many groſs delu- " ſions of a ſuperſtitious kind, the courſe of this fear begins to " turn; 'tis natural for it to run, with equal violence, a contrary " way. The extreme paſſion for religious objects paſſes into an " averſion. And a certain horror and dread of impoſture cauſes " as great a diſturbance as even impoſture itſelf had done before. " In ſuch a ſituation as this, the mind may eaſily be blinded, as " well in one reſpect, as in the other. 'Tis plain, both theſe " diſorders carry ſomething with them which diſcover us to be " in ſome manner beſide our reaſon, and out of the right uſe of " judgment and underſtanding. For how can we be ſaid to in- " truſt or uſe our reaſon, if, in any caſe, we fear to be convinced? " How are we maſters of ourſelves, when we have acquired the " habit of bringing horror, averſion, favour, fondneſs, or any o- " ther temper than that of mere indifference and impartiality, in- " to the judgment of opinions, and ſearch of truth?" Characteriſt. vol. iii. p. 65.

for ends and purpoſes ſuited to the nature of the agent. So that miracles are the actions of a higher order of Beings. So far, however, are ſuch actions from being comprehended in the natural courſe of acting that is proper to thoſe Beings, and wherein they are conſtantly employed, that, even with regard to thoſe Beings, ſuch actions are uncommon and extraordinary, and cannot be performed by them without their moving out of their common ſphere of action, and attending to the production of a ſtrange work, to which they are not accuſtomed. And doubtleſs the motive muſt be weighty, the reaſon very important, that can determine any of thoſe Beings to leave their proper work, and going out of their common road, if I may ſpeak ſo, exert themſelves in producing an event, in every reſpect ſtrange and extraordinary.

But, as all miracles, wrought for the common benefit of mankind, are either by the immediate efficiency, or the expreſs appointment of the great Lord of the univerſe, theſe may juſtly be regarded as the works or operations of God. And, viewing miracles in this light, we are led to conceive, that, as an infinitely perfect Being has eſtabliſhed general laws, whereby all events are brought about and directed; and as, in his all-wiſe, and all-good, and all-powerful Providence, he is continually attending to the irreſiſtible efficacy, and the ſteady progreſſion of thoſe laws, in all inſtances, all over the univerſe, ſo if, in any particular inſtance, this great Being ſhall be pleaſed to ſtop the progreſs of ſuch a certain general law, ſtill efficacious in all other inſtances, and thereby interrupt the uniformity of his adminiſtration, producing an event quite out of the ſettled courſe and order of his government; muſt we not apprehend, the reaſons are of high import-

ance, worthy the character of an infinitely perfect Being, that could move him to interpose in so uncommon and extraordinary a manner,——in such a particular instance, to suspend the force of a general law, and produce an event of so singular a nature? Beyond all question, the nature and quality of the action or event, its design and tendency, must be of that complexion, and of that importance that will fairly suit the wisdom and goodness, the greatness and dignity of the character concerned in the production. And thus, in my apprehension, not only have we easy access to a certain *criterion* whereby to judge what miracles are divine, or may be esteemed the extraordinary works of God; but we may likewise clearly understand, that

The same evidence that is sufficient to convince us of the truth of any common event happening among mankind, is not sufficient to ascertain the truth of a miracle. For, as to those events, wherein our fellow-men are the sole actors, and that happen in the common course of things, our knowledge of human nature, and our experience of mankind, enable us to judge of the probability or truth of human actions, in such characters and in such circumstances. But, although our own consciousness, and our experience of the world may serve us directly to apprehend the motives and springs of human actions, and thereby engage us readily to admit such particular actions, as real matters of fact, when reported by creditable witnesses; yet in relation to the extraordinary works of God, wherein he is pleased to recede from the common tract of his administration, and in such a particular instance to suspend the force of a general law, which, in all other instances, is still prevailing, it is impossible we can all at once clearly discern, and safely judge of the motives, worthy the

sovereign

ſovereign Ruler of the univerſe, that might bring about ſuch an amazing interpoſition. Here, therefore, we muſt ſtop, till we ſhall have examined the matter with that care and impartiality that ſuit the importance of the queſtion. Nor, whilſt we are totally ignorant, uninformed, or not ſatisfied as to thoſe divine motives productive of miracles, can the report of any witneſs, how creditable ſoever in the common incidents of life, with any ſhew of reaſon, engage our faith, or deſerve to be credited. Let me repeat it again, the actions here in queſtion, are not the common operations of God, or the ordinary productions of his Providence; they are his very extraordinary works, and muſt be the effects of ſome particularly grand deſign ſuited to the greatneſs and majeſty of the Agent, not immediately obvious to the human mind. As therefore in all miracles there are two things particularly to be regarded, namely, the viſible or ſenſible effect, and the inviſible and extraordinary interpoſition of the Deity effecting it; ſo, notwithſtanding the former, the ſenſible effect may poſſibly be atteſted in the moſt authentic and ſolemn manner, by witneſſes in all other reſpects unexceptionable; yet this, of itſelf, can be no ſufficient foundation upon which to ground an aſſurance of the latter, the inviſible and extraordinary interpoſition of God. Of this we can be aſſured only by an evidence peculiar to itſelf, wherein we perceive, in ſome meaſure, the great deſigns of an infinitely perfect Being, deſigns that cannot be accompliſhed by the preſent eſtabliſhment of God in the natural frame and ſtructure of the univerſe. Thus to me it appears manifeſt, that the ſame evidence that is ſufficient to convince us of the truth of the common events of life, is not ſufficient to aſcertain the truth of a miracle.

At

At the same time, there is a number of miracles noised abroad, that seem to require no examination, in order to our discovering their origin and design, and to our judging of their credibility. Of such sort of miracles, without having recourse to common history, we have great plenty in the public offices of the church of *Rome*, I mean in their *Breviary*, the established form of their solemn, religious worship, where those miracles must be regarded as the foundation of their devotion, or of their adoring Saints and images (*e*). But I proceed to this other observation :

In

(*b*) In the festival of St. Stanislaus Bishop of Cracow, we are assured, that this Saint, having no other way whereby to clear himself from a charge of sacrilege brought against him by the King in an assembly of the States, commanded one Peter, who had been dead three years, to rise out of his grave ; and, as he had before undertaken, this very man he produces in open court as an unexceptionable witness to attest his innocence. But neither this, nor any other miracle, was able to repress the King's resentment against him : For, as the soldiers that were sent to murder the Bishop in his church, had been repelled twice by a secret force, and once from heaven ; the King himself with his own hands dispatched him, and cutting him in pieces, scattered his members through the fields. Nevertheless, his Majesty had it not in his power to prevent the miracles that continued to be wrought in this Saint's justification : For, whilst eagles defended every portion of the Bishop's body from ravenous beasts, the Canons of his church came by night, and discerning the scattered members by means of a brightness shining on them from heaven, they gathered them together, and placing them, each in its natural situation, immediately those members united with one another, and again made up the body of the Saint, without so much as the scar of a wound. Upon these, and many other miracles, Pope Innocent IV. canonized St. Stanislaus. Breviar. Festa Maii 7 D.

But had not Tuccia, the Vestal virgin, an equal title among the Heathen, to be sainted or deified, as she justified her innocence likewise by a miracle ? Arrepto enim cribro : Vesta, inquit, si sacris tuis castas semper admovi manus, effice, ut hoc hauriam e Tiberi aquam, et in aedem tuam perferam. Audaciter et temere

jactis

In settling the character of any Historian, or how far such a man's testimony, as to the matters of fact reported by him, may be trusted; our conviction of the credit due to him, must be founded, not upon the opinion of other people, whether his contemporaries or not, but upon his own writings, which ought to be the sincere, genuine effects of his veracity and judgment. Nor, in our thus going about to satisfy ourselves from his writings, concerning the veracity and judgment of any particular Historian, is

jactis votis sacerdotis, rerum ipsa natura cessit. Valer. Max. lib. viii. cap. 1. As for the rest of the Popish miracle, it is a part of the story of Hippolytus; in whose case the miracle, as it rises higher, and gives life to the scattered members when joined together, seems to have more sense and reason in it. The Reader, I hope, will not judge it an indecency, that I here give him an account of it from Spencer's Fairy Queen, B. i. cant. 5. stanz. 38, 39. where it is represented thus:

His goodly corps on ragged clifts yrent
Was quite dismembred, and his members chaste
Scatter'd on every mountain, as he went,
That of Hippolytus was left no monument.

* * * * * * *

——— His rash fire began to rend
His hair, and hasty tongue that did offend:
Who gathering up the relics of his smart,
By Dian's means, who was Hippolyt's friend,
Them brought to Æsculape, that by his art
Did heal them all again, and joined every part.

For Diana, as Ovid observes, was mightily concerned for this disaster of Hippolytus. But there is no cause of sorrow, says Æsculapius;

Namque pio juveni vitam sine vulnere reddam,
Et cedent arti tristia Fata meae.

* * * * * * *

Pectora ter tetigit, ter verba salubria dixit,
Depositum terrâ sustulit ille caput.

Ovid. Fast. lib. vi. & 747.

Again,

is it enough that we conſider the nature and importance of the matters of fact he relates, or that we compare the ſeveral parts of his hiſtory together, or that we examine them by the accounts of other Hiſtorians, or by the circumſtances of that time and place of the world to which his hiſtory refers; but we ought, in an eſpecial manner, to attend, whether thoſe particular actions he reports, are ſuited, or do fairly anſwer to the character and circumſtances of thoſe perſons to whom he imputes them.

Indeed,

Again, the Roman Breviary, having mentioned ſeveral articles concerning Dionyſius the Areopagite, which all the world now knows to be mere forgery, goes on, and tells us, that this Saint, when above an hundred years old, having ſuffered martyrdom for the ſake of the Goſpel, after his head was ſevered from his body, took it up in his hands, and carried it two miles. Dionyſius annum agens ſupra centeſimum, cum reliquis ſecuri percutitur ſeptimo Idus Octobris. De quo illud memoriae proditum eſt, abſciſſum ſuum caput ſuſtuliſſe, et progreſſum ad duo millia paſſuum manibus geſtâſſe. Feſta Octobr 9 D. There are indeed other inſtances of the ſame nature in the church of Rome; ſuch as that of Oriculus, who, after his head was ſtruck off, went and waſhed it in a fountain; and by his finger with his blood drew the ſign of the croſs upon a rock, ſaid, in my Author's time, to be ſtill very viſible; and then, with his head in his hands, retired into the ſepulchre which he had built for himſelf: Where many miracles are ſaid to have been wrought. Flodoardi hiſt. eccleſiae Rom. lib. i. cap. 8: But I am not able to recollect where the Heathen can boaſt of ſuch prodigies. Only, if I am not greatly miſtaken, it is ſomewhere ſaid, that a Prieſt of Jupiter being murdered, and every attempt to find out the murderer having failed, the Prieſt's head, ſevered from his body, made the diſcovery, and told diſtinctly that ſuch a particular perſon had murdered him.

I ſhall only add, that Trajan having condemned Clemens Romanus to be caſt into the ſea, with an anchor bound to his neck; as ſome Chriſtians upon the ſhore were putting up their prayers, the ſea going back three miles, this led them forward to where they found a little lodge of marble in form of a church, and in it a coffin of ſtone, wherein lay the body of the martyr, and near to it the anchor which had been tied about his neck. Feſta Novembr. 23 D.

How

Indeed, as all the individuals of human kind are of a mixed character, one cannot expect from the truth of things, to meet with a perfect uniformity of action in any man, all wiſdom or all folly, all virtue or all vice. And for this reaſon, although in ſome inſtances that ſuit not a man's main temper and character, it may be difficult to diſcern the real truth, yet there are actions quite ſuitable, and therefore very credible, in one man's character, which in another man's, one eaſily perceives, would be abſolutely inconſiſtent, and beyond the bounds of credibility. Thus, that extravagantly wild and ridiculous expedition of *Caligula*, which ended in the gathering of cockle-ſhells, the ſpoils, as the tyrant termed them, of the conquered ocean, due to the capitol and palace, and upon which he cauſed preparations to be made for a triumph; how well ſoever ſuch an action may anſwer, and deſerve credit in the character

How far this Popiſh miracle is of kin to a very odd ſtory concerning an image of Theagenes, told by Pauſanias, the Reader may judge: "After the death of Theagenes, one of his enemies "taking an opportunity by night, to wreck his revenge againſt "him, falls a laſhing his image with ſuch violence, that the i-"mage falls, and by its weight, as it was of braſs, kills the man. "The image therefore is by the dead man's ſons accuſed of mur-"der; and being found guilty, it is ſolemnly condemned, and "caſt into the ſea. After this a famine happening, and the "Oracle at Delphi being conſulted after what manner they "ſhould appeaſe the gods, in order to be delivered from this "calamity; they are commanded to recall Theagenes, and to "reſtore him to his place. This perplexes the Thaſians greatly. "But, as ſome Fiſhermen were out at ſea, and had the good "fortune to incloſe this image in their net; by this means A-"pollo comes to be obeyed; the image of Theagenes is brought "back, and put in its former place; it receives divine honours; "and works miracles." Pauſan. lib. vi. cap. 11. Can any thing more nearly reſemble a Popiſh miracle?

Such kind of miracles are very numerous in the Roman Breviary, but too abſurd and contemptible for inquiry or argument.

character of *Caligula*, moſt manifeſt it is, that in the character of *Julius Cæſar*, it would be utterly repugnant, and altogether incredible. I ſay, therefore, that, in determining the credit of an Hiſtorian from his writings, or how far his judgment and veracity are to be depended on, one ought to obſerve very particularly, whether the actions he relates, do really ſuit the undoubted characters of the Agents. And as herein, with reſpect to mixed or imperfect characters, the hazard of our being miſtaken becomes always leſs, in proportion to the conſtancy of an Agent in ſuch a certain ſeries of actions; ſo, where the character is abſolutely perfect, and cannot therefore but always uniformly purſue the meaſures of wiſdom and goodneſs, if one is not biaſſed by ſtrong prejudices, one cannot well be miſtaken in apprehending the actions that are worthy, or that ſuit ſuch a character; and conſequently, in judging how far the veracity and judgment of an Hiſtorian, in reporting ſuch particular actions to have been done by ſuch an Agent, deſerve to be regarded.

Here then, in the caſe of miracles, actions wherein an infinitely perfect character is concerned, no Hiſtorian, in his account of ſuch events, ought to be credited, before we are fully ſatisfied, that thoſe particular actions, aſcribed to a divine interpoſition, do moſt certainly correſpond with the nature and perfections of an all-wiſe and all-good Being, the ſovereign Governor of the univerſe. And thus conſidering the nature and perfections of God as an infallible ſtandard, whereby to judge of the credibility of miracles, of divine extraordinary interpoſitions, and conſequently of the judgment and veracity of the perſon who reports them; no man void of prejudice, who attends to the nature and adminiſtration of the Deity, as we learn them from the works

of

of Creation and Providence, in the natural frame and course of things, can expect to meet with frequent miracles, with miracles in every age, or with miracles to be regarded by mankind, that are not of the highest consequence to mankind. So that in the belief of miracles, by whomsoever reported, every man is bound, in duty to God, and as he values his own good, and the good of others, to use the utmost caution, and to believe none, but which, after the most exact and rigorous scrutiny, he clearly perceives are worthy of God, and deservedly esteemed divine operations. And how many ages of miracles, since the days of the Apostles, such a conduct must cut off, I leave to the judgment of the Reader (*c*).

(*c*) Having explained by what criterion one may judge, whether such particular miracles do really come from God; and here laying it down as an undoubted maxim, That in a competition of miracles, we ought in reason, to be determined by those that are incontestibly superior; I shall proceed to observe, that

A particular system of religion, or rather of religious rites, which God has established by miracles, may be abrogated or altered, and another substituted in its room, which mankind are bound to submit to, when God shall be pleased to justify it by another set of miracles superior to the former. And this, in my apprehension, is manifestly the case with respect to the Jewish institution, which, in its original frame, being only temporary, behoved to give way to the Christian Revelation: And this change our Saviour and his Apostles did fully justify to the Jews, by miracles more and greater than ever had been wrought in Israel.

But, as we are assured, that beings of different and opposite characters do work miracles of a contrary tendency; and nothing can be more certain, than that the herd of mankind are not able, by abstract reasoning, to distinguish to which side reason or the nature of things necessarily directs them; one cannot but apprehend, that in such circumstances, in order to carry the consent of mankind, the superior Being ought to give full and open proof of his superiority. And this I take to be the case of the Heathen and Christian institutions with respect to one another.

That the Heathen world did firmly believe, that they had numberless miracles wrought among them, is beyond question.

Of

I have juſt now hinted, that even with reſpect to a mixed or imperfect character, ſome actions are abſolutely incredible, ſo unworthy, and unſuitable to the ſuppoſed Agent, that an Hiſtorian, in reporting them, would immediately forfeit all his veracity and judgment. But of ſuch inconſiſtencies and contradictions, with reſpect to a character infinitely perfect, how much more ſenſible muſt we be, to the total

Of thoſe miracles I ſhall have occaſion to take notice afterwards: Here I ſhall give only a ſmall ſpecimen, from whence the Reader may judge to what a height the Heathen went in their belief of ſuch events. Pauſanias having told us, "That Æſculapius was "the ſon of Apollo; that intending to conceal his birth, his "mother Coronis expoſed the infant on a mountain of Epidau-"rus; that a goat and a dog left the herd paſturing upon the "mountain, the one to ſuckle the child, and the other to guard "him; that the Goat-herd, in ſeeking after the goat and his "dog, lighted upon the infant, and was deſigning to have taken "him up; but as he approached, obſerving a luſtre of divinity "iſſuing from him, he retired: Immediately (ſays the Hiſtorian) "it was publiſhed by ſea and land, all over the world, that "Æſculapius cured all manner of diſeaſes, and even raiſed the "dead." Pauſan. in Corinth. lib. ii. cap. 26.

Now, as all ſuch miracles, whereby the Heathen were ſtrongly attached to their gods, were confeſſedly wrought (for I do not here call their reality into queſtion) by Beings of a character altogether different and oppoſite to the character of the Author of the miracles of the Goſpel; one ſhould think, that in order to diſſolve this attachment of the Heathen world to their idols, and to gain them over to the worſhip of the true God, it was indiſpenſibly neceſſary, not only that miracles ſhould be wrought, but that the Chriſtian miracles ſhould carry in them a manifeſt ſuperiority above all thoſe miracles wrought among the Heathen. Accordingly, the Apoſtles and Diſciples of our Lord, not only gave the world an authentic account of the miracles of Jeſus, (whoſe credibility the Heathen had it in their power, and were at full liberty to examine) but they themſelves travelling over the face of the earth, did every where, among all nations, in town and country, in the moſt frequented and public places of the world, in the ſeat of the Roman empire, work all manner of miracles. And as theſe miracles did every where appear manifeſtly ſuperior to all that were in the Heathen world; ſo, infinite numbers of Heathens thereby moved,

total diſcredit of the Reporter? St. *Dominic*, a moſt renowned Saint, and a mighty worker of miracles, the founder of one of the moſt conſiderable Orders of the church of *Rome*, " Being one night in his " ſtudies, greatly diſturbed by the devil in the ſhape " of a monkey, came to be ſo provoked, that, by " an interpoſition of the divine power, he ſeverely " puniſhed the devil in that ludicrous ſhape, cauſing " him

moved, came to forſake their idolatry, and to embrace the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt.

Thus, therefore, in the days of the Apoſtles, the ſuperiority of the Goſpel-miracles above all that were among the Heathen, was fully eſtabliſhed. And after this, for what good reaſon, can any man imagine, ſhould miracles be continued in the church of God? Certain it is, if it be not where they are ſamples of the doctrines taught, as in the caſe of the reſurrection, miracles of themſelves can prove the truth of no doctrine whatſoever; otherwiſe, being wrought by contrary characters, they might prove the truth of contrary doctrines. And as Chriſtians can ſtand in need of no more miracles, upon which to ground their faith of the Goſpel; and are only to bear in mind this ſeaſonable warning of our Saviour, *If any man ſhall ſay unto you, Lo, here is* Chriſt, *or there; believe it not. For there ſhall ariſe falſe* Chriſts *and falſe Prophets, and ſhall ſhew great ſigns and wonders*, Matth. xxiv. 23, 24. So the miracles of the Goſpel being incomparably ſuperior to thoſe of the Jewiſh inſtitution, by no means can the Jews reaſonably withſtand the force of theſe miracles. Nor can the Heathen world, as there is full and ample evidence, eaſy to be apprehended, that the miracles of Jeſus and his Apoſtles are, by infinite odds, preferable before any miracles they can pretend to have been wrought by their deities, have any colour of reaſon to demand any more. And after this, I ſay, to what good purpoſe can miracles ſerve, or for what good reaſon can we conceive God will ſtill interpoſe, and continue to ſuſpend or alter, in any inſtance, his eſtabliſhed laws of nature? May not one preſume to think, that, after the days of the Apoſtles, the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt was left, with the aſſiſtance of numberleſs miracles already wrought, and already prevalent over great numbers of all ranks in all nations, to maintain and extend its conqueſts in the world, by its own inward native force and excellency, ariſing from its intire conformity to the nature and perfections of God, and its exact fitneſs to promote, in every ſtage of our exiſtence, the real and laſting happineſs of mankind?

" him hold his candle to him, till it had burnt him " to the bone." At another time, " Some devils " having entered into a man, who had the impiety " to make a mock of *Dominic* and his *Rosary*; this " good Saint, void of revenge, and full of huma- " nity, is prevailed upon to *exorcise* this unhappy " demoniac. But, as the devils happened to re- " fuse to answer some questions he had put to " them, the *Virgin Mary*, attended with a numerous " train of Angels, comes from heaven, and, join- " ing the assembly, she assists the Saint in his office, " and with her rod switching the demoniac, forces " the devils to make answer. At length St. *Domi-* " *nic* with a loud voice, calling upon all present to " join him in reciting his *Rosary*; behold! at e- " very angelical salutation, a multitude of devils " came rushing out of the demoniac, in the shape of " burning coals. Thus the poor man is relieved. " And the Virgin, having given the congregation " her blessing, disappeared (*d*)." Such are the ac- counts

(*d*) It may not, perhaps, be unacceptable to some of my Readers to be informed, that the Rosary, a present of the blessed Virgin to St. Dominic, is an aggregate or heap, no less than an hundred, of *Ave Marias* (the Angel's salutation to the Virgin, Luke i.) with a *Pater-noster* interposed at the end of every ten: All which, in order to secure the merit of saying them, which, by missing but one of the number, would be intirely lost, are counted on beads. Nor can this chaplet of beads have its place otherwise supplied: For those very beads, being blessed by the Pope, have several indulgences, or some particular divine graces or virtues, annexed to them. So that the same number of *Ave Marias* said or counted upon one's buttons, for example, or after any other manner, would have no good effects attending them. Like all the other trinkets stamped with the Pope's benediction, these beads, without regarding the moral dispositions of the mind, have a physical influence in extinguishing the guilt of sin, and in procuring the favour and protection of heaven.

I cannot but here observe, that as this Rosary was invented by St Dominic, for the perdition of human souls; so, by the same renowned Saint was the Inquisition invented, for the destruction of human bodies!

counts that in some ages have greatly abounded; and perhaps the like events are, in some places, still happening. But, to put upon the world such impertinent, silly stories, as miracles, the wonderful works, not of impudent cheats and jugglers, but of the sovereign Lord of the universe, is, beyond measure, profane and impious. Those enthusiastic madmen think nothing of the great God, but to make him subservient to the vilest and the most irreligious purposes. So far are such senseless wicked tales from having one single circumstance of credibility, that they only violently shock the common sense of mankind, and among people not altogether infatuated by superstition, must immediately meet with the utmost contempt. But, what I here propose, is, to impress the Reader with a sense of this important truth,

The credibility of miracles, the supernatural actions of God Almighty, a Being absolutely perfect, must arise particularly from the congruity they bear to his nature and perfections. This is the particular circumstance, without which no Worker or Reporter of miracles can approve his integrity, or his veracity and judgment, to the good opinion of any man of sober sense and reason. It is this particular circumstance that I mainly point at, when I mention the credibility of miracles. In a word, in all miracles, wherein such a congruity is not apparent, the presumptions against them are invincible. Nor can the world otherwise save themselves from the impositions of weak, credulous minds, bearing a shew of piety and honesty; or from the forgeries of sly, designing Impostors, that lie in wait to deceive. From all which, one may easily apprehend, that where the nature and perfections of God are not known, or not attended to, *i. e.* where true, rational religion, that

that religion which cometh down from the Father, does not prevail; there weak, superstitious minds must boast of their visionary conceits; there bold, crafty impostors must triumph in their delusions (*e*).

Thus far I have freely declared my sentiments concerning miracles, and upon what evidence the Workers or Reporters of them may be judged worthy of credit; which may help us to a better understanding of the present question. So that I now come to consider this mighty argument that is to do so much execution. And the great Inventor of it introduces it after this manner:

He tells us, that our experience is the ground upon which our assurance as to the real truth of matters of fact, is founded; and that from the highest degree of assurance we may be brought down to the lowest, till it comes totally to fail us, according as the constancy or frequency of our experience happens to decrease, and at last wholly to evanish. After this, the Gentleman comes to the point, and thus proceeds: "A miracle (says he) is a violation "of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalter- "able experience has established these laws, the "proof against a miracle, from the very nature of "the fact, is as intire as any argument from expe- "rience can possibly be imagined. Why is it more "than probable, that all men must die; that lead "cannot, of itself, remain suspended in the air; "that fire consumes wood, and is extinguished by "water; unless it be that these events are agree- "able to the laws of nature, and there is required "a violation of these laws, or, in other words, a "miracle,

(*e*) Such was always the unhappy state of mankind: Prodigia eo anno multa nunciata sunt, quae quo magis credebant simplices ac religiosi homines, eo etiam plura nunciabantur. Liv. lib. xxiv. § 10.

" miracle, to prevent them? Nothing is esteemed " a miracle if it ever happen in the common course " of nature. It is no miracle, that a man in seem- " ing good health, should die of a sudden; because " such a kind of death, though more unusual than " any other, has yet been frequently observed to " happen. But it is a miracle, that a dead man should " come to life; because that has never been ob- " served, in any age or country. There must, " therefore, be an uniform experience against every " miraculous event, otherwise the event would not " merit that appellation. And, as an uniform ex- " perience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct " and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against " the existence of any miracle; nor can such a " proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered cre- " dible, but by an opposite proof that is superi- " or (*f*)."

This is the decisive argument, which, the Gentleman flatters himself, will, with the wise and learned, for ever ruin the credit of all miracles, and, while the world lasts, prove an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion. How far such sanguine expectations may come to be gratified, as to the success of this argument with the wise and learned, the Gentlemen of that character are best able to judge. Only, as it is not altogether so new, as it is here represented, other people, perhaps, may by this time, be able to form a conjecture. For my part, I am apt to think, that it requires no great stock of wisdom and learning to understand the weakness and fallacy of this wondrous argument. Of such consequence, I confess, it appears to me, that if this Gentleman be not pleased to renew his labour to better purpose, I am afraid the world must have

(*f*) P. 180.

have the misfortune ſtill to remain in a ſtate of deluſion. I ſhall here impartially conſider it in its ſeveral branches, and as I am concerned only for truth, give them all the weight they can poſſibly bear.

Firſt of all, then, the Gentleman tells us, "A "miracle is a violation of the laws of nature;" or, as he obſerves in the margin, "A miracle may be "accurately defined, a tranſgreſſion of a law of "nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or "by the interpoſal of ſome inviſible Agent." But what accuracy is there in imputing a tranſgreſſion of any kind to the Deity? Indeed, if it be a firm and unalterable experience of ours, as the Gentleman ſeems to ſay, that has eſtabliſhed the laws of nature, we may, in that caſe, pretend a right to complain, and to call it a tranſgreſſion, when, in any inſtance, thoſe laws are by other Beings incroached upon, or not uniformly obſerved. But, as the laws of nature, I mean, of the material world, (having nothing in them, like geometrical and moral truths of abſolute neceſſity) are the arbitrary eſtabliſhment of the Deity, and our experience only ſerves to aſſure us of their exiſtence; one ſhould think that the ſame powerful Being who eſtabliſhed thoſe laws, has full right to annul, or ſuſpend, or alter them, in what particular inſtances his infinite wiſdom and goodneſs ſhall direct him. I would rather, as I hinted before, define a miracle, "a ſenſible effect produced, "either by the immediate power of God, or by the "power of ſome inviſible Agent, under the direction "or permiſſion of God, in ſuſpending or altering "the laws of nature, in ſuch a particular inſtance, "for ends and purpoſes ſuited to the nature of the "Agent." And conceiving this notion of a miracle, we are directly led to apprehend, that, in the

the nature of things, the production of a miracle, is full as eaſy for God (if in relation to a Being omnipotent, one may ſpeak ſo) or for thoſe inviſible Agents he may be pleaſed to employ or permit, as it is for a man to produce the moſt common and ordinary effect. When, therefore, we conſider the nature of things, or compare the power and the effect together, we cannot but obſerve, that a miracle is, in itſelf, altogether as credible, and as well proportioned to the common belief of mankind, as any other event whatſoever. So that, from the nature of the fact, as it is a ſenſible effect, produced by a power equal and ſufficient, we are ſo far from having a direct and full proof, that we have no ſort of proof, againſt the exiſtence of a miracle.

But here the Gentleman may be underſtood to make anſwer: "Though the Being to whom the "miracle is aſcribed, be almighty, yet it does not, "upon that account, become a whit more probable, "ſince it is impoſſible for us to know the attributes "or actions of ſuch a Being, otherwiſe than from "the experience which we have of his productions, "in the uſual courſe of nature (*f*)." And can we have no knowledge of the perfections of God, but from our experience of them in the uſual courſe of nature! If theſe are the Gentleman's ſentiments, (too groſs, perhaps, for *Spinoſa* himſelf) I am afraid we are too far advanced in the argument.——But I am not here to go about to demonſtrate or explain the being and attributes of God. I ſhall only repeat what I have juſt now ſaid, and here lay it down as a common maxim, that "the ſame almighty "Being, who at firſt eſtabliſhed the laws of na-"ture, has it ſtill in his power to ſuſpend or alter

(*f*) P. 201. Marg.

" thoſe laws, in what particular inſtances he may, " in his infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, judge pro- " per and fitting." This, I ſay, is a common maxim, obvious to the common underſtanding of mankind, who are able to form any juſt notions concerning the Deity. Thus far, therefore, as I have before hinted, a miracle is, in itſelf, " cre- " dible, and a proper object of human belief; and " can afford no proof from the nature of the fact, " againſt its real and certain exiſtence." So that this branch of the Gentleman's argument is without all foundation.

Another branch is this: " 'Tis a miracle, (ſays " the Gentleman) that a dead man ſhould come " to life, becauſe that has never been obſerved " in any age or country. There muſt, therefore, " be an uniform experience againſt every miracu- " lous event, otherwiſe the event would not merit " that appellation." What can here be meant by an event's being a miracle, becauſe it has never been obſerved in any age or country, does not lie quite ſo level to my underſtanding. 'Tis a way of arguing that can do little honour to this new found argument. And indeed, if after this manner it requires to be ſupported, no body needs envy the Gentleman the grand diſcovery. But, upon what authority does the Gentleman pretend to ſay, that " a dead man's coming to life, has never been ob- " ſerved in any age or country?" I cannot but think, that the Goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt*, does expreſsly declare, that ſuch events were obſerved under the reign of *Tiberius*, and in the land of *Judea*. And how uniform ſoever we may now find the experience of this age and of this country, with reſpect to the ſteady obſervation of the laws of nature, yet the ſame hiſtory informs us, that the experience of that age,

age, and of that country, was frequently interrupted, and men then ſaw with their eyes, not for a ſhort ſpace of time, but for a tract of years, the laws of nature, in numberleſs inſtances, ſuſpended and altered. And, to overthrow the credit of this hiſtory, is it ſufficient, or is it only neceſſary for this Gentleman to ſtand up and pronounce, "a miracle is an event that never happened, "or that never has been obſerved in any age "or country; there muſt, therefore, be an uniform "experience againſt every miraculous event." No doubt, the Gentleman's authority may be very conſiderable; but I hope he will forgive me, if I preſume to think, that the authority of the Goſpel-hiſtorians is intitled to the preference.

It is true, he ſets not up as an Hiſtorian, but as a Philoſopher. And, in this character, I could wiſh he would inform me, wherein lies the ſtrength of his argument: It is ſtrongly reported, that, "in "ſuch an age, and in ſuch a country, and for ſuch "a number of years, numberleſs miracles were pu-"blicly wrought in the face and view of the world, "and whereof mankind had long and full experi-"ence:" "But, (ſays our Philoſopher) there is an "uniform experience againſt every miraculous e-"vent, for that no miracle has ever been ob-"ſerved in any age or country." This, I confeſs, is an argument; but, if I am not greatly miſtaken, it is what Philoſophers uſe to call, *a begging the queſtion*, which they always incline to treat with neglect and contempt.

Hitherto we have met with nothing that ſeems capable of recommending this argument to the wiſe and learned. We have only ſeen, with what abſurdity the Gentleman aſſures the world, that, from the nature of the fact itſelf (in whoſe ſtead he plainly ſubſtitutes

ſubſtitutes a circumſtance) there ariſes a direct and full proof againſt the exiſtence of any miracle; and that a miracle is an event, that has never been obſerved in any age or country. But, perhaps, I may be doing the Gentleman an injuſtice, from my not rightly apprehending his ſentiments. And, I confeſs, when I look into them more narrowly, they ſeem to ſhew themſelves in this other light.

The Gentleman, indeed, firſt obſerves, that "a "miracle is a violation of the laws of nature:" But then, he is pleaſed immediately to tell us; "it "is a miracle that a dead man ſhould come to life; "becauſe that has never been obſerved in any age "or country." So that from the reaſon, or rather the circumſtance, here aſſigned, upon which ſuch a particular event would be eſteemed a miracle, one cannot but judge, that, in his view of things, the true definition of a miracle is this; "It is an event "that never happened, or has never been obſerved "in the world." And, in his opinion, ſo eſſential to the nature of a miracle, or ſo neceſſary to the conſtituting of any ſuch event as can be called a miracle, is this very circumſtance of its "having "never been obſerved in any age or country; that "otherwiſe (ſays he) or ſhould that event come "to happen, or to be obſerved in the world, it "would not then merit that appellation. The con-"ſequence therefore is unavoidable, there muſt be "an uniform experience againſt every miraculous "event;" or, no man in any age or country, can pretend, that any miracle ever came within the compaſs of his experience. Thus, we ſee, that, upon ſettling his notions, after his own way, and framing his definitions, as he would have them, concerning miraculous events, the Gentleman is able to demonſtrate, that no miracle ever had, or can have an exiſtence;

exiſtence; thereby giving an everlaſting check to all kinds of ſuperſtitious deluſion. And, after the ſame manner, may any one demonſtrate any thing.

Had *Ariſtodemus* in *Xenophon* been ſo fortunate as to have prevented the Gentleman in the diſcovery of this mighty argument, and under its influence maintained the cauſe of Atheiſm againſt *Socrates*, with great eaſe might he have confounded that Philoſopher, by telling him, "a Deity is a Being that "never had, and never can have an exiſtence: "And ſo eſſential to the nature of a Deity, is this "particular of non-exiſtence, that ſhould ſuch a "Being come to exiſt in the univerſe, he would "not merit that appellation. There muſt, there-"fore, be an uniform aſſurance againſt the exiſt-"ence of a Deity; or, no man, in any age or "country, can pretend, that ſuch a Being ever "came within the compaſs of his knowledge." This, in my apprehenſion, is the Gentleman's argument. And whatever the wiſe and learned may judge of it, I really think there is neither more nor leſs in it. But poſſibly, in looking back upon the ſteps whereby we are led to it, one may come to have a more favourable view of it. Let this, therefore, be another branch of this myſterious argument.

"In our reaſonings concerning matter of fact, "there are all imaginable degrees of aſſurance, from "the higheſt certainty to the loweſt ſpecies of mo-"ral evidence. A wiſe man, therefore, propor-"tions his belief to the evidence. In ſuch conclu-"ſions as are founded on an infallible experience, "he expects the event with the laſt degree of aſ-"ſurance, and regards his paſt experience as a full "proof of the future exiſtence of that event. In "other caſes he proceeds with more caution: He "weighs

" weighs the oppoſite experiments: He conſiders " which ſide is ſupported by the greateſt number of " experiments: To that ſide he inclines with doubt " and heſitation; and when at laſt he fixes his " judgment, the evidence exceeds not what we " properly call probability. All probability, then, " ſuppoſes an oppoſition of experiments and obſerva- " tions; where one ſide is found to overbalance " the other, and to produce a degree of evidence, " proportioned to the ſuperiority. A hundred in- " ſtances on one ſide, and fifty on another, afford " a very doubtful expectation of any event; tho' " a hundred uniform experiments, with only one " contradictory one, does reaſonably beget a very " ſtrong degree of aſſurance. In all caſes, we muſt " balance the oppoſite experiments, where they are " oppoſite, and deduct the leſſer from the greater, " in order to know the exact force of the ſuperior " evidence (*g*)." Now, upon theſe principles, the Gentleman proceeds thus:

" Our aſſurance, (ſays he) as to the real exiſt- " ence of matters of fact, is derived from no other " principle than our obſervation of the veracity of " human teſtimony, and of the uſual conformity of " facts to the reports of witneſſes (*h*). And as it " is from the concurrence of both theſe, that we " judge of the truth and reality of events, ſo our " belief of them, or our admitting or rejecting " them, muſt always be governed by our experi- " ence of that concurrence. Thus, if the con- " junction betwixt any particular kind of report, " and any kind of objects, has been found, in our " experience, to be conſtant and invariable, as " there is here no oppoſition, we can have no heſi-

" tation

(*g*) P. 175. (*h*) P. 176, 177.

" tation concerning ſuch events, but muſt neceſſa-
" rily conceive the ſtrongeſt aſſurance of their ex-
" iſtence. But when the facts atteſted are ſuch as
" have ſeldom fallen under our obſervation, here
" there is an oppoſition; events do not commonly
" happen ſo; we therefore heſitate; and, balancing
" things together, our belief muſt be proportioned
" to the frequency of our experience in obſerving
" ſuch events, and their connection with the re-
" ports of witneſſes. But ſuppoſing the facts to be
" ſuch, whereof we never had any experience; as
" in ſuch inſtances, we never have obſerved the
" conjunction betwixt ſuch ſort of reports, and
" ſuch ſorts of objects, the whole weight of our
" experience lies againſt them; we have no one in-
" ſtance of ſuch events; the inſtances on the other
" ſide are infinite; which cannot, therefore, but
" command the whole of our aſſurance: And, apply-
" ing this to the caſe of miracles, whereof we have
" no degree of experience, if with thoſe inſtances,
" wherein ſome people pretend miracles, we com-
" pare thoſe others, of the ſame claſs of things,
" wherein our experience aſſures us, there is no
" miracle, the latter will quite annihilate the for-
" mer. So that, inſtead of admitting the truth of
" any miraculous events, or giving credit to the
" teſtimony that would eſtabliſh them, we muſt
" ſettle in this general concluſion, *No teſtimony for*
" *any kind of miracle can ever poſſibly amount to a pro-*
" *bability, much leſs to a proof* (*i*). Nay, *a miracle*
" *ſupported by any human teſtimony, is more properly a*
" *ſubject of deriſion than of argument* (*k*)." This is
the Gentleman's reaſoning. And, ſo far as I am
able to underſtand it, the whole of it comes to this;
the

(*i*) P. 198. (*k*) P. 195.

the Author of the *Eſſays Moral and Political* never had the experience of any miraculous events; and therefore, never did ſuch events happen in the world. I am apt to think, that, upon the face of this argument, every man ſees its refutation. But, as if its fallacy lay deeper, and were not ſo eaſy to be decerned, I ſhall here pay it a little more regard. The argument, then, is this:

We, the men of this age, having all the experiments that 30, 40, or 60 years can afford us, for the ſtability of the laws of nature, and that in no inſtance they have ſuffered any alteration from the interpoſition of any inviſible Agent, but have gone on, always uniformly producing their proper effects; if we lay all theſe numberleſs experiments in the balance, againſt thoſe others, wherein the men of the Apoſtolical age do affirm, they ſaw the laws of nature ſuſpended or altered, the former will infinitely outweigh the latter; or, if we ſubtract the leſſer number from the greater, "this ſubtraction "(as the Gentleman expreſſes it) will amount to an "intire annihilation."

This, I ſay, is the reaſoning that muſt break the credit of the Goſpel-miracles, and for ever ruin their authority. And, no doubt, if we compare the numbers on each ſide, I mean the numbers of inſtances, wherein the laws of nature have been uniformly preſerved, and the number of inſtances, wherein, it is ſaid, they have been ſuſpended or altered; the one will bear no ſort of proportion to the other, but in the compariſon muſt totally evaniſh. But where matters of fact are abſolutely independent, and have each of them their own proper and ſeparate exiſtence, without in the leaſt claſhing or interfering together, how extravagantly abſurd is it to go about to ſettle their real truth and certainty, by forming

forming a compariſon of abſtracted numbers? It is confeſſed, that the number of dead men, ſuch as *Matthew*, *Mark*, *&c.* who, by the laws of nature, have remained in the unrelenting hands of death, is infinite. But what concernment have thoſe inſtances, how numberleſs ſoever, with the caſe of *Lazarus*, or what oppoſition can they poſſibly bear to the reſurrection of this man, who was called back to life, by a power equal to the effect? In all the other inſtances, beyond number, wherein no ſuperior Being interpoſed, the laws of nature prevailed: But here in this event, no ways connected with any of the former, thoſe laws are ſuſpended, or a power above them is exerted. I ſhall illuſtrate this article by taking notice of ſome events, which, if they are not miracles, may well be called prodigies, as therein the laws of nature have been ſtrangely interrupted, or have amazingly deviated from their common courſe; and which, in the nature and reaſon of things, ſeem far more inexplicable, than the production of any miracle, and are much leſs proportioned to human belief (*l*).

(*l*) From the nature and reaſon of things, can the Gentleman explain the poſſibility of this amazing event, and recommend the exiſtence of ſuch a monſter to our belief? Or, becauſe he never ſaw an inſtance of the kind, and cannot therefore here perceive the conformity of facts to the report of witneſſes; does he deny its exiſtence, which is atteſted by many eye-witneſſes of credit and honour?

Circa hæc tempora, monſtrum novi generis in Scotia natum eſt, inferiore quidem corporis parte ſpecie maris, nec quicquam a communi hominum forma diſcrepans: umbilicum vero ſupra, trunco corporis ac reliquis omnibus membris geminis, et ad uſum et ſpeciem diſcretis. Id rex diligenter et educandum et erudiendum curavit; ac maxime in muſicis, qua in re mirabiliter profecit. Quin et varias linguas edidicit, et variis voluntatibus duo corpora ſecum diſcordia diſſentiebant: ac interim litigabant cum aliud

Within the compaſs of my experience, there is an infinite number of inſtances, wherein the laws of nature have been ever ſteady and uniform, in the production of human creatures. But I am told, there are inſtances wherein thoſe laws have been mightily diſturbed in their regular courſe; and human creatures have been produced, ſome with one head and two bodies; and others with one body and two heads. How, then, ſhall I ſatisfy myſelf as to the truth of ſuch extraordinary events confidently reported? Here, indeed, ſome people may pretend to ſay, that even thoſe very uncommon and extraordinary events may be rationally accounted for, as "they are not contrary or repugnant to the real "laws of nature, but only out of the uſual courſe." Upon which, a very good friend of the Gentleman's, and whom he certainly reckons among the wiſe and learned, will give us to underſtand, that, at this rate, "we make the uniform and ſettled "courſe, and the real laws of nature, two different "things. Thus, (ſays he) we argue without any "foundation, either from ſenſe or reaſon; all which "inform us, that it is impoſſible for ſuch monſters "to come into being: To believe it poſſible, con-

"tradicts

aliud alii placeret: interim velut in commune conſultabant. Illud etiam in eo memorabile fuit, quod, cum inferne crura lumbive offenderentur, utrumque corpus communiter dolorem ſentiret; cum vero ſuperne pungeretur, aut alioqui læderetur, ad alterum corpus tantum doloris ſenſus perveniret: quod diſcrimen etiam in morte fuit magis perſpicuum. Nam, cum alterum corpus complures ante alterum dies extinctum fuiſſet, quod ſuperſtes fuit, dimidio ſui computreſcente, paullatim contabuit. Vixit id monſtrum annos viginti octo; ac deceſſit, adminiſtrante rem Scoticam Joanne Prorege. Hac de re ſcripſimus eo confidentius, quod adhuc ſuperſunt homines honeſti complures, qui hæc viderint. Buchan. Hiſt. lib. 13. cap. 7.

" tradicts this maxim, that nature is ſteady and uni-
" form in her operations (*m*)."

But the queſtion is not here, concerning the inward poſſibility of events, or how far they are capable of being explained. In this view, I have already ſaid, and I again repeat it, It appears to me, that ſuch prodigies are, in themſelves, far more inexplicable than the production of any miracle, and much leſs proportioned to human belief. The queſtion is, as I have no experience of any ſuch events, and never have obſerved the connection betwixt ſuch ſort of report, and ſuch ſort of objects, how ſhall I ſettle my belief as to the reality of their exiſtence? If, according to the Gentleman's reaſoning, I balance the numbers of experiments on both ſides; ſuch is the diſproportion, that my experience is infinitely ſuperior, and muſt therefore lead me, with no leſs aſſurance, confidently to aver, never had ſuch monſtruous births an exiſtence. But what influence has my experience here in *Britain*, how equal and uniform ſoever, over the experience of the people in *Muſcovy*, whoſe experience has been interrupted, and in ſome inſtances informed them of the real exiſtence of ſuch prodigies? Indeed if our experience wholly related to the ſame particular objects, and a thouſand of one ſide, from their experience, ſhould declare, that ſuch a particular event, in ſuch particular circumſtances, never happened; and fifty on the other ſide, from their experience, ſhould as poſitively declare, that that event, in thoſe circumſtances, did actually happen: Here

(*m*) The Reſurrection of Jeſus conſidered, &c. p. 75. where the Author's reaſoning is againſt the exiſtence of miracles; but as it equally diſproves that of monſters, I have here ſet it in that light.

Here, (could such a case exist) as those experiences are not only different, but opposite, and cannot, therefore, but mutually affect each other; we may follow the Gentleman's rule, and, all other things being equal, "deduct the lesser number from the "greater, in order to know the exact force of the "superior evidence." But, I say, where people's experience manifestly concerns matters of fact absolutely different, having no sort of connection together, and capable of existing, as a man and a horse do, separately and independently: How is it possible, in such instances, for one man's experince to destroy that of another? In the case of *John*, *Peter*, *Thomas*, and in all other instances, experience assures me, that men are formed in the womb, and come into the world, only with one head: And would mankind bear with me should I boldly pronounce, this experience of mine destroys that of *M. Duvernoi*, in the case of a child, which his eyes saw and his hands handled; and is a direct and full proof, that "that learned and ingenious Gentleman never "did dissect a human creature with two heads at "*Petersburgh* (*n*)?" No less presumptuous is that man's language, who takes upon him to assure the world, his eyes never saw a miracle; and therefore, all those miracles talked of in the Gospel, are renounced lies! A mighty champion this! who blusters so loud, and swaggers so daringly against the religion of his country.

But this argument, pursued as it ought to be, will carry the matter a little further, and discredit the evidence of one's own senses. We have already seen, that, in the Gentleman's way of reasoning, the experience of other people, or their attestation of

(*n*) Vid. Comment. Petropolit. tom. III. p. 177, 188.

of matters of fact, cannot possibly stand, but must of course fall to the ground; especially in those instances, wherein the laws of nature have been either preternaturally interrupted and diverted, or supernaturally suspended or altered, and whereof we ourselves have had no experience: Because those instances, wherein our experience assures us, the laws of nature have been uniformly preserved, being infinitely more numerous than those other instances, wherein other people alledge, they have been interrupted, suspended or altered; if we balance those numbers together, the lesser comes to be nothing in comparison to the greater. Now, by the same train of reasoning, a man's own experience cannot fail, in some instances, to annihilate itself. Thus, in numberless instances, experience informs me, that men are brought into the world with two arms. But one instance there is, wherein, I shall suppose, I saw a man born without arms (*o*). Here then, in the Gentleman's way of concluding things, "is a "contest of two opposite experiences, of which "the one destroys the other, as far as its force goes, "and the superior must operate upon the mind, by "the force that remains (*p*)." Which, in this case, being infinite, or beyond all comparison, cannot but annihilate this single instance of a man's being born without arms.

After the same manner must this argument prevail against the reality of all miracles, whereof any man can imagine he has the experience. For as, beyond question, the number of instances wherein experience makes him confident, the laws of nature have been preserved in their regular and usual course, infinitely exceeds that number, wherein he has seen those

(*o*) Vid. Ibid. tom. VI. p. 249. (*p*) P. 179.

thoſe laws ſuſpended or altered; ſo judging of the truth of events, from conſidering how abſtracted numbers, like Algebraic quantities, come to extinguiſh one another, he cannot but regard the few miraculous events he has ſeen, as mere nothing, or void of all reality: So that this ſort of reaſoning againſt the exiſtence of miracles, fairly reduces people to diſbelieve, not only the teſtimony of other people, but that of their own ſenſes. Whether this Gentleman means that his argument ſhould be carried thus far, I ſhall not ſay. But the other Gentleman, whom I was attending in the preceeding Section, is not far from avowing openly, that in the matter of miracles, "he would not believe his "own ſenſes." However it be, Mathematicians themſelves ſeem to think, that an argument leading people to an abſurdity, is a demonſtrative proof of the truth of the contrary propoſition.

Thus, having conſidered the ſteps whereby the Gentleman leads us to his argument, and that ſeem to be the foundation upon which he builds it; it is ſtill apparent, that "a miracle is an event in itſelf "credible; eaſy for a ſuperior Being to produce; "proprtioned to human belief; and againſt the "exiſtence of which, no argument can be drawn "from the nature of the fact, or from the common "experience of mankind."

I am ſenſible, that, upon an argument, which in ſo plain a manner betrays itſelf, or whoſe fallacy lies ſo bare and open, I have dwelt too long. But, as in our preſent melancholy ſituation, a great many of mankind, eſpecially of what they call, *the genteeler world*, ſeem now to be quite ſick of the religion of the Goſpel, as an inſtitution too pure and refined for their groſs ſordid appetites, and too noble and exalted for their mean trifling purſuits; and are

therefore

therefore mighty fond of every Writer on the ſide of Scepticiſm and Infidelity, admiring thoſe infidel Gentlemen as their great Deliverers, who are come to knock off their fetters, and to turn them looſe amidſt their "many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, "which drown men in deſtruction and perdition;" I was willing to ſet this argument in every light, that thoſe unhappy perſons might ſee, if they will attend to any thing that would rectify their follies, how ſhamefully they are bubbled in truſting an argument, that vainly pretends to ruin the credit of all miracles. And, for the ſame reaſon, I beg leave to proceed a little further, and conſider thoſe preſumptions, which the Gentleman tells us, every man muſt have againſt the truth of miracles.

But, before I enter upon this, I muſt here diſtinguiſh betwixt a man's notions and apprehenſions concerning a matter of fact, and the exiſtence of that matter of fact itſelf, attended with all its circumſtances of credibility, that can recommend it to the belief of mankind. Let it then be obſerved, that, as to people's notions and apprehenſions concerning a matter of fact, and their belief or diſbelief of its reality, moſt certain it is, thoſe notions may be formed, and in numberleſs inſtances they are formed, according to the paſſions or prejudices the mind happens to be under, when people go about to judge of the event, whereby one may be led to reject a certain truth, or to embrace a downright falſhood. But as certain it is, that independently of our notions, and of any judgment we form of it, every matter of fact has its own proper exiſtence, and is attended with its own particular circumſtances of credibility, that make up the peculiar evidence upon which it can acquire any credit or authority among mankind. Let other

facts,

facts, therefore, of the ſame denomination, be found to be manifeſt forgeries, and let us think of them with all the contempt poſſible; our immediately concluding from thence, that ſuch another particular fact offered to our belief, is no better, without attending to the particular ſituation and circumſtances of that fact, upon which alone one can judge of the truth of its exiſtence, is moſt abſurd and irrational. I ſay, let us think of matters of fact what we will, let us judge of them right or wrong, ſtill they are in themſelves independent; and our notions concerning them can have no influence over the reality of their exiſtence, or the truth and importance of thoſe circumſtances, whereby only one can be led to perceive their credibility, and to which alone a lover of truth directs his attention, as every thing elſe is altogether foreign, abſolutely frivolous, and quite beſide the purpoſe.

Now, as for thoſe preſumptions, which, in the Gentleman's opinion, every thinking man muſt have againſt the truth of miracles, we are told; "There "is a ſtrong propenſity in human nature towards "the extraordinary and the marvellous, which "ought reaſonably to beget a ſuſpicion againſt all "relations of this kind (*q*)." "But, if the ſpirit "of religion joins itſelf to the love of wonder, there "is an end of common ſenſe; and human teſtimo-"ny, in theſe circumſtances, loſes all pretenſions to "authority (*r*)." And, no doubt, as the Gentleman obſerves, "The many inſtances of forged mi-"racles, and propheſies, and ſupernatural events, "which have either been detected by contrary e-"vidence, or which detect themſelves by their ab-"ſurdity, put it beyond queſtion, that, at leaſt, the herd

(*q*) P. 186. Marg. (*r*) P. 185.

" herd of mankind are, in ſome circumſtances, a-
" bundantly fooliſh and credulous, and have been
" ſhamefully cheated." But, becauſe the generality of mankind have ſome paſſions, that " incline them
" to the believing and reporting, with the greateſt
" vehemence and aſſurance, all religious miracles," does it therefore follow, that our aſſurance from human teſtimony, in any kind of miracle, wherein religion is concerned, muſt be extremely diminiſhed?

There is, unqueſtionably, in human nature, a ſtrong paſſion to be entertained with things uncommon and extraordinary, of which not only ſome Travellers take advantage, but Jugglers and Tumblers, and ſuch ſort of idle, inſignificant creatures. But as to miracles, events wherein ſuperior Beings are underſtood to be concerned, mankind do not ſeem to have a prevailing paſſion, that univerſally inclines them to believe and admit ſuch events. It is only among the ſuperſtitious, poſſibly the bulk of our ſpecies, a ſet of people, in their notions of religion, always weak, fearful, and credulous, that we find ſuch a propenſion. As for the reſt of mankind, who have a juſt underſtanding of the Deity, and follow the ſpirit of religion; theſe are under no ready diſpoſition to believe miraculous events; nor do they incline to admit them but very cautiouſly; they are ſtrangers to credulity, and muſt therefore feel the power of a thorough, rational conviction. I confeſs, it is an article of the Gentleman's creed, (for thoſe people too, have their creeds, made up, indeed, of the profoundeſt myſteries) that " the ſpirit
" of religion, when joined to the love of wonder,
" deſtroys all the remains of common ſenſe," which otherwiſe might be left us. But the repreſenting the ſpirit of religion as worſe than this weak, ſilly paſſion, the love of wonder, and as compleating the

ruin of common ſenſe, has ſomething in it ſo unmanly, ſo wild and uncouth, that one muſt wonder, what ſort of ſpirit our Infidel Gentlemen would introduce and propagate in the world, had they the forming and the direction of mankind. *True religion, and undefiled before God*, is animated with a ſpirit that enobles and elevates the common ſenſe of mankind, and that exalts the human mind to a participation of the divine nature. And ſuch a ſpirit, I am confident, can be ſubject to no blind paſſion for miracles, nor is it capable of being led away by the idle reports of ſuch events. It comes from God, and it knows God, and it *tries the ſpirits whether they are of God.* It is, therefore, I ſay, the ſpirit of ſuperſtition, that inſpires people with the love of wonder, and that makes them credulous in believing miracles. At the ſame time, how credulous and forward ſoever the ſuperſtitious part of the world may be ſaid to be, in believing and reporting, with the greateſt vehemence and aſſurance, all religious miracles; it is to be obſerved, that this powerful bias, whereby they are ſwayed, always leans ſtrongly towards thoſe miracles, that ſeem to favour and ſupport that ſcheme of religion, to which a man is already devoted; and is rather a ſtrong bar againſt the belief of thoſe other miracles, that would juſtify another, or a contrary ſet of principles. So that all religious miracles, without diſtinction, can never meet with equal reception.

But, in the matter of miracles, let the credulity and ſuperſtition of the generality of mankind be what it will, how can this abate our aſſurance, from human teſtimony, in every kind of miracle? To be ſure, the ſtrangeneſs of ſuch events, and the proneneſs that mankind have to entertain and propagate reports of that nature, ought, by all means, to prevent

vent our being raſh and forward, and make us very cautious and wary how we admit the truth of any miracle. But, as every miracle offered to our belief, muſt be of ſuch a determined nature, muſt have its own ſeparate exiſtence, and be attended with its own particular circumſtances, upon which alone its credit, or our aſſurance of its exiſtence, muſt be founded; if with circumſpection and exactneſs we enter into the examination of any miracle, and upon a fair and impartial view of its nature, and of all its circumſtances thoroughly canvaſſed, we clearly perceive its credibility, or that, according to all the laws of good arguing in ſuch caſes, it is a proper object of human belief; it is impoſſible for me to imagine, what can here, in the leaſt, diminiſh our belief, or prevent our having full aſſurance, as to the truth and reality of ſuch a miracle. No doubt, whilſt we are examining into the truth of a miracle, if we carry along with us our apprehenſions, concerning the propenſity of mankind to the extraordinary and marvellous, and that many falſe miracles have been impoſed upon the world; and if, without regarding thoſe apprehenſions, only as cautions to prevent our being forward and inconſiderate, and to engage us to keep a ſtrict guard, that nothing may be admitted but upon ſtrict and rigorous inquiry, we ſuffer them to hang a bias upon our minds, whereby we are led to apprehend things, not in their own, but in a falſe light; in this caſe, indeed, the miracle may appear to us as a forgery, and come therefore to be rejected. But this manifeſtly ariſes from our miſtaking things, or our not perceiving them as they really are, and our ſuffering our prejudices to pervert and miſlead our judgment. Whereas, I ſay, whilſt we carefully attend, only to the nature of the miracle, and its particular circumſtances,

ſtances, from which alone the real truth can be diſcerned, as we are not here biaſſed by any foreign conſideration, there is nothing that can poſſibly abate or weaken our aſſurance of its exiſtence. The nature and circumſtances of paſt facts, are in themſelves unalterable; and, if we form our judgment upon them, our aſſurance muſt always be the ſame, ſteady and uniform.

I am prone to think, that this propenſion in the bulk of mankind eaſily to believe prodigies and miracles, takes its riſe from a prior diſpoſition in human nature, whereby we are led to believe the exiſtence of ſuperior Beings, who concern themſelves with mankind, and interpoſe in human affairs. For where people are of opinion, there is no God, or no Providence, or that this complexion of things, whoſe actions are all fatally produced by neceſſary, immutable laws, is God; one muſt conceive a miracle abſolutely impoſſible. Now this diſpoſition, which makes it ſo eaſy for us to believe the exiſtence of ſuperior Beings, from whence that other propenſion towards the belief of miracles is derived, has, in fact, led mankind into the belief of a great number of falſe deities. And, as from this propenſity of mankind to acknowledge ſuperior Beings, and their having been thereupon betrayed into the belief of a multiplicity of falſe gods; no man can argue, that our aſſurance concerning the being and perfections of the true God, muſt be mightily impaired; ſo, as little can it be pretended, that our aſſurance as to any kind of miracle muſt be extremely diminiſhed, becauſe the generality of mankind, or the ſuperſtitious part of our ſpecies, have a ſtrong propenſion to believe miracles, and, in numberleſs inſtances, have been groſsly impoſed upon. Every truth and every matter of fact, as I have often obſerved,

ſerved, being ſupported, each by its own proper evidence, which, independently of us, and of our prejudices, is, in itſelf, always fixed and unchangeable, our aſſurance grounded on that evidence can ſuffer no diminution.

In the next place, we are told; "It forms a very "ſtrong preſumption againſt all ſupernatural and "miraculous relations, that they are always found "chiefly to abound amongſt ignorant and barbarous "nations (*s*)." And what are thoſe miraculous relations? Why truly, they are "Battles, revolutions, "peſtilences, famines, and deaths; which (ſays the "Gentleman) in the firſt hiſtories of all nations, "are never the effects of thoſe natural cauſes, which "we experience; but are always regarded as ſuper-"natural events." So that "Prodigies, omens, "oracles, judgments, quite obſcure and overſhadow "the few natural events that are intermingled with "them (*t*)." Whether theſe obſervations of the Gentleman are well founded, or how far he may be pleaſed to allow Providence to interpoſe in bringing about and directing ſuch events, it does not concern my argument to inquire. I would only here obſerve, that whatever has been, or may be, the propenſity of the bulk of mankind to aſcribe battles, revolutions, peſtilences, famines, and deaths, to an extraordinary interpoſition of Providence, or of ſuperior Beings; it is impoſſible, as I have already explained, that this can, in any degree, leſſen our aſſurance from human teſtimony, in every kind of miracle. Nor does the Gentleman here alledge, that thoſe events, mentioned, as he ſays, under ſuch a notion, in the firſt hiſtories of all nations, are mere forgery; in themſelves they are true and certain; he only condemns people's opinions in ſuch caſes, or he

(*s*) P. 186. (*t*) P. 187.

he blames thoſe ignorant and barbarous nations for regarding ſuch events as ſupernatural or miraculous. "For (ſays he) as we advance nearer the inlightened ages of ſcience and knowledge, we ſoon learn "that there is nothing myſterious or ſupernatural "in the caſe, but that all proceeds from the uſual "propenſity of mankind towards the marvellous "and extraordinary." So that the world, now inlightened, no longer follow the propenſion of their nature, and attribute battles, revolutions, peſtilences, famines, and deaths, to a particular interpoſition of Providence, but to the eſtabliſhed, or, as they call them, the blind laws of Nature. And, as ſuch events are ſtill happening, though not attended with an opinion of their having in them any thing miraculous; if it is not that he chuſes to ſtep aſide, in order to paſs a compliment upon the religion of his country, I know not with what good ſenſe or propriety the Gentleman ſubjoins the following reflections:

"'Tis ſtrange, a judicious Reader is apt to ſay, "upon the peruſal of theſe wonderful Hiſtorians, "that ſuch prodigious events never happen in our "days. But 'tis nothing ſtrange, I hope, that men "ſhould lye in all ages. You muſt ſurely have ſeen "inſtances enow of that frailty. You have your"ſelf heard many ſuch prodigious relations ſtarted, "which, being treated with ſcorn by all the wiſe "and judicious, have at laſt been abandoned, even "by the vulgar. Be aſſured, that thoſe renowned "lyes, which have ſpread and flouriſhed to ſuch a "monſtrous height, aroſe from like beginnings; "but, being ſown in a more proper ſoil, ſhot up at "laſt into prodigies almoſt equal to thoſe which "they relate (*u*)." The Author of this language cannot

(*u*) P. 188.

cannot but know, how rudely it muſt grate upon every Chriſtian ear, and that the reproaching one's religion in ſo abuſive a manner is very apt to provoke human paſſions. But the religion of the bleſſed *Jeſus*, which is here ſo groſsly reviled, commands all his Diſciples to *be courteous*, *not rendering evil for evil*, *or railing for railing*, *but*, *contrarywiſe*, *bleſſing*. I ſhall therefore only ſay, no man that has not been educated in *Billingſgate*, ought to uſurp the rhetoric of thoſe quarters; it greatly miſbecomes a Gentleman; nor can the pure love of truth ever come to expreſs itſelf in ſo foul a dialect. In ſhort, the religion of one's country, a religion that in the fulleſt and ſtrongeſt manner, adopts and enforces all the laws of righteouſneſs; and which, in a courſe of ſtrict inquiry and cool reaſoning, men of the fineſt parts and learning have examined and defended, has certainly a juſt claim to decent language and civil treatment. Poſſibly, after a deciſive argument, that manifeſtly bears in it all the marks of ſuperiority, ſome men may think themſelves intitled to brave their adverſary, and to beſtow upon his baffled cauſe ſome very coarſe epithets. But the Gentleman's argument is none of this ſort. He only tells us, that he never, in his days, obſerved any ſuch experiments in ſuſpending the laws of nature, as are ſaid to have happened in the days of the Apoſtles: And upon this, forſooth, he would have us to reſt confident, that all the miracles then noiſed abroad, are *renowned lyes!* But how comes this Gentleman's experience to have ſo deſtructive an influence over the experience of other people, and the credit of their teſtimony? A miracle is a very uncommon and unuſual event: And, I am apt to think, that it is only the ſtrangeneſs or uncommonneſs of the thing, that the Gentleman here makes a reaſon againſt its exiſtence.

iſtence. And is not this a manifeſt breach of the laws of good reaſoning, nearly approaching to that ſort of argument they call *a begging the queſtion?* It is certainly no more but the making an outward circumſtance, or an external denomination, a concluſive argument againſt the real exiſtence of things. A noble ſupport for ſo rude a charge! But to return:

The Gentleman having told us, that ignorant and barbarous nations do impoſe upon themſelves, in attributing ſome events to the agency of ſuperior Beings, which belong only to natural cauſes; (from whence it is ridiculous to imagine, there is any the leaſt ground to ſuſpect the truth of every miracle,) he proceeds to inform us, that among ſuch ſort of people, an Impoſtor muſt prove very ſucceſsful in gaining credit to his deluſions and forgeries. And, to aſſure us of this, which needs but little proof, he inſtances in that impudent Impoſtor *Alexander*, whoſe life is writ by *Lucian*. So that becauſe of the frauds and intrigues of *Alexander*, the Gentleman would have us to queſtion the miracles of *Jeſus Chriſt*. And, in this view, might not one expect to ſee the deluſions of that Impoſtor, bearing ſome ſort of reſemblance to the Goſpel-miracles, recommending themſelves to our belief from their own nature, and other credible circumſtances? Whether this be the caſe, let the Reader judge.

Here is the miraculous event, upon which the whole of *Alexander*'s credit is grounded. "This "infamous Impoſtor having found means to raiſe "in people's minds an expectation, that *Æſculapius* "and *Apollo* were ſoon to appear among them; of "this the inhabitants of a little town, called *Abonus-*"*Wall*, came to be ſo much perſuaded, that they "ſet about the building of a temple for their ſer-"vice.

" vice. Here, therefore, one morning, in one of his " extatic fits, *Alexander* appears almoſt ſtark naked " in the *Forum*, the moſt public and frequented part " of the town, toſſing his hair, and uttering ſome un- " intelligible words, but diſtinctly pronouncing *Æ-* " *ſculapius* and *Apollo*, and congratulating to the " town, that they were ſo ſoon to have the god a- " mong them. The noiſe of this uncommon event " having brought together almoſt the whole town; " when the Impoſtor found himſelf thus attend- " ed, he makes off directly to the temple that was " a-building, and there, ſinging the hymns of *Æ-* " *ſculapius* and *Apollo*, and inviting the god to ap- " pear, he takes a vial, and out of the mud, at the " bottom of the ditch dug for the foundation, where " ſome water was lodged, brings up an egg; and " calling aloud, *Now he had got* Æſculapius, he holds " up to the view of all preſent a *Serpent*, the ſymbol " of that god, taken out of the egg. The people " are ſtruck with wonder: They adore the god, " and felicitate his arrival. Some days after this, " when the fame of the miracle had filled the whole " town with *Paphlagonians* from the country; ſeat- " ing himſelf in a couch, in a dreſs ſuited to the ho- " nour of the god, he ſhows them a *huge Serpent*, " quite tame and gentle, winding about his neck, " with its tail upon the ground, and its head, of a " human ſhape, coming from his boſom. So that " here again the people are greatly aſtoniſhed, and " count it a mighty miracle, that the little ſerpent, " in ſo ſhort a time, had grown up to ſo vaſt a bulk, " had a human face, and was quite mild and tracta- " ble." Thus it was that *Alexander* abuſed the peo- ple into a belief, that *Æſculapius* was come among them. And by this means having eſtabliſhed his own credit (for that the god was in his keeping) he

immediately opens his oracle, and gives out his Reſponſes. And the fraud ſpreads, and for many years is continued.

Such, I ſay, were the miracles upon which *Alexander* founded his reputation, and procured credit to his deluſions. And, without making any reflections upon the matter, I leave it to the Reader to judge, whether, from this caſe of *Alexander*, one's aſſurance from human teſtimony, in any kind of miracle, muſt be extremely diminiſhed. In my apprehenſion, the tricks and impoſitions of mere jugglers and fortune-tellers, than whom this Impoſtor was no better (and indeed he was a mighty dealer in their ware) might as well be adduced as inſtances, whereby to ſhake our belief, or abate our aſſurance in the miracles of the Goſpel. 'Tis really ſurpriſing, how a Gentleman, who cannot be inſenſible to *decorum*, can ſuffer himſelf to bring in competition things ſo abſolutely diſproportioned. And, whatever he means when he tells us, "It does not always happen, tho' much to "be wiſhed, that every *Alexander* meets with a *Lu-*"*cian*, ready to expoſe and detect his impoſtures (*x*);" he cannot but know, that altho' *Lucian* was engaged in expoſing, all he was able, the Chriſtian revelation to contempt and ridicule; yet, however he ſets up to deride ſome of the Chriſtian doctrines, he never once goes about to diſcredit the truth of any of the miracles, or in the leaſt inſinuate, they are deluſion and impoſture. Nay, one may learn from *Lucian*, that "Chriſtians were men of integrity and prudence, e-"nemies to impoſtors, and ready to expoſe and de-"tect their forgeries." On which account *Alexander* hated them mortally, and "laid his commands upon "the people, if they would have the god propitious, "to

(*x*) P. 90.

" to stone them out of their towns (*y*)." As therefore common sense, free of all superstition, cannot but despise *Alexander*'s pretensions, and laugh at his story, as in itself absolutely incredible, absurd and ridiculous: So here it is that the Gentleman's observation is mighty just and proper; " Fools are prone " to believe, and industrious to propagate the delu- " sion; while the wise and learned are contented, " in general, to deride its absurdity, without in- " forming themselves of the particular facts by which " it may be distinctly refuted (*z*)." This, I say, precisely suits the case of *Alexander*. But what absurdity have the wise and learned to deride in this event that happened to the Apostle *Paul?*

And when Paul *had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the Barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves; No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, tho' he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit, they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: But, after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said, that he was a god* (*a*). Had such an event, in itself neither

(*y*) Επεὶ δὲ πολλοι τῶν νῦν ἐχόντων, ὥσπερ ἢ ἐκ μέθης βαθείας ἀναφέροντες, συνίσαντο ἐπ' αὐτὸν, ἢ μάλιθ' ὅσοι Επικούρε ἑταῖροι ἦσαν, ἢ ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἐπεφώρατο ἠρέμα ἢ πασα μαγγανεία, ἢ συσκενὴ τῦ δράματος. ἐκφέρει φόβητρόν τι ἐπ' αὐτὺς, λέγων, ἀθεων ἐμπεπλῆσθαι ἢ Χριστιανῶν τὸν Πόντον· ὅι περὶ αὐτῦ τολμῶσι τὰ κάκιστα βλασφημεῖν· ὃς ἐκέλευε, λίθοις ἐλαύνειν, εἴγε ἐθέλησιν ἵλεῳ ἔχειν τὸν Θεόν· Lucian. Pseudomant. p. 762.

(*z*) P. 188. (*a*) Acts xxviii. 3.

neither abſurd nor incredible, come into the management of an *Alexander*, who knew the devotion of mankind to *Æſculapius*, and was therefore watching an opportunity to take the advantage of that paſſion, with what eaſe and ſafety, even at *Athens* itſelf, amidſt the Philoſophers of that renowned mart of learning, would he have raiſed his reputation, and ſet up his Oracles? Inſtead of ſhaking off the beaſt into the fire, the god would have been preſerved, a temple built for *Æſculapius*, the fame of his Oracles would have filled the world; nor would a *Lucian* have had it in his power to diſcredit the impoſture. Nay rather, upon the principles then prevailing among mankind, *Lucian* might have left *Epicurus*, and become one of its moſt zealous votaries. But I am wandering from my ſubject:

I am here only concerned to obſerve, the proneneſs of the bulk of mankind, or of the ſuperſtitious part of our ſpecies, to believe things extraordinary and miraculous, wherein they have been often miſtaken, or impoſed upon, is no reaſon why we ſhould abate our aſſurance in the miracles of the Goſpel, whoſe authority, like that of all other matters of fact, muſt wholly reſt upon their own proper evidence, independently of our paſſions and prejudices.

But the Gentleman goes on, and mentions another reaſon, which, he ſays, diminiſhes the authority of miracles. The reaſon is this: "There is (ſays he) "no teſtimony for any miracles, even thoſe which "have not been expreſsly detected, that is not oppo-"ſed by an infinite number of witneſſes (*b*)." His meaning is, "As all religions, how different and con-"tradictory ſoever, do, in his opinion, pretend, each "of them to be ſupported by its own particular ſet "of miracles; ſo thoſe miracles that ſupport any par-"ticular

(*b*) P. 199.

" ticular ſyſtem of religion, muſt be underſtood to " be contradicted by all thoſe other miracles, that " ſupport all the other and contrary ſyſtems. So " that, for inſtance, the miracles of the Goſpel, that " would juſtify the Chriſtian religion, are oppoſed, " and have their credit deſtroyed, by an infinite " number of witneſſes, namely, all the other mi- " racles that ſupport all the other different and con- " trary religions among mankind." This, I ſuppoſe, is the Gentleman's reaſoning, which, he is afraid, may appear over ſubtile and refined. But the argument is abundantly obvious. And, in order to prove its ſtrength, let all the other miracles, upon which all the other different and contrary religions are eſtabliſhed, be collected together, and fairly balanced with thoſe of the Goſpel.

Here, I hope, the Gentleman is a little more conſcionable than to propoſe, that we ſhould ſettle the matter by bare numbers, or give the preference immediately to that ſide, upon which may ſtand the higheſt computation in figures. I would fain think, he will judge it highly reaſonable, that having firſt carefully examined into the ſeveral religions, that ſtand in competition; how far their particular doctrines are conſiſtent with the nature and perfections of God, and are of conſequence to the good and happineſs of mankind; or whether they are capable of receiving any ſort of countenance from heaven; we ſhould then impartially conſider the nature and circumſtances of thoſe miracles, whereby each ſyſtem of religion pretends to be ſupported; how far they are in their own nature credible, and with what degrees of evidence they are attended, and recommend themſelves to the belief of mankind. If the Gentleman will condeſcend to debate the queſtion in this method, I am in no pain

for

for the Chriſtian revelation. Nay, if the queſtion muſt needs be determined by bare numbers in computing miracles, I am willing herein likewiſe to join iſſue with him.

And I would beg to be informed; where is that infinite number of witneſſes, or of other miracles, that ſtand oppoſed to thoſe of the Goſpel? Why, the Gentleman tells us, that the religions of antient *Rome*, of *Turkey*, of *Siam*, and of *China*, do all of them abound in miracles (*c*). Upon which, I cannot but obſerve in general, that an innocent well-meaning Reader, being told, that thoſe different religions, as well as the Chriſtian, abound in miracles, may be apt to expect, that, among the miracles of thoſe religions, he will meet with numberleſs inſtances, wherein the blind, the deaf, the lame, all manner of diſeaſed perſons were cured, and the dead raiſed to life again. But as herein our Free-thinkers cannot but know, a man's expectations muſt be greatly diſappointed; Is it fair in thoſe Gentlemen, who hate to ſee mankind miſled, to tantalize and abuſe honeſt-hearted people after this manner? As for the religion of *Siam* and of *China*, I confeſs, I know not what they are, or upon what miracles they are founded. Nor have we any ſuch correſpondence with thoſe diſtant parts of the world, as can afford us full and certain information concerning thoſe articles. However,

They tell us, that the religion of the people of *Siam*, conſiſts in worſhipping and imitating the life of their God *Sommona-Codom*, who having paſt thro' a long ſucceſſion of tranſmigrations, came at length from a man to be transformed into a god. This is their religion. But I am not aware, upon what miracles they ground it. Perhaps, when the Gentleman

(*c*) P. 191.

tleman comes to particulars, and to oppoſe the miracles of this religion, to thoſe of the Goſpel, he may be pleaſed to inform us, that after *Sommonokhodom*, (for ſo he is likewiſe called) " came to be " ſenſible of his being a god, having one day a pa- " ſionate deſire of manifeſting his divinity to the " world, by ſome extraordinary miracle, he immedi- " ately found himſelf mounted up into the air, " ſeated on a throne, which had ſtarted out of the " earth where he ſtood, all ſparkling with gold and " precious ſtones: Upon which, the Angels forth- " with deſcending from heaven, paid him the ho- " nours and adorations due to him." What other miracles, in the religion of the *Siameſe*, the Gentleman may think proper to mention, I know not; but this, methinks, is a very fundamental one.

As to the people of *China*: It is ſaid, that *Confucius* is the Author or Reviver of their philoſophy or religion, and a particular object of their worſhip. But I have not heard, that this Philoſopher either wrought, or pretended to work miracles, upon which to eſtabliſh his own miſſion, or the truth of his doctrines; which he does not alledge, he had from heaven, but from the records of ſome wiſe Princes and Legiſlators of former ages. I confeſs, that, in the Annals of this nation, which, by the by, have little credit among the *Chineſe* themſelves, there are a great many very extraordinary things reported: But they ſeem not to have any relation to the eſtabliſhment of any ſort of religion. But, if the Gentleman will force them into his ſervice, they are ſuch as theſe: *Hoaſi*, the mother of *Fohi* their firſt King, and who civilized that people, " having ac- " cidentally trod in the footſteps of a Giant, and " being environed with the rain-bow, ſhe concei- " ved her ſon, who had the head of a man, and the " body

" body of a ſerpent." There are, however, among the *Chineſe*, two other ſects of religion beſides that of *Confucius*. Of one of thoſe ſects, *Lao Kiun*, a Philoſopher contemporary with *Confucius*, was the founder. But what miracles he was the Author of, I am altogether ignorant. For, I dare ſay, the Gentleman will not pretend, that what his Diſciples report, concerning his being, as ſome ſay, eighty-one years, or, as others ſay, " forty years in his " mother's womb, and his coming into the world " through her ſide, which occaſioned her death," is a miracle to be placed to his account. The other ſect was introduced into *China* ſome hundreds of years after the two former. It came from the *Indies*, and the Author of it is the god *Fo*, the great object of their religious worſhip. Of this god they tell us, that hardly was he ſeparated from his mother's womb, through her ſide too, at the expence of her life, but he ſtood upright, and meaſuring exactly ſeven paces, he pointed with one hand to the heavens, and with the other to the earth, diſtinctly pronouncing theſe words, " There is none but my-" ſelf in the heaven, or on the earth, that ought " to be adored." Such are the wonderful things that are reported concerning the founders of thoſe two ſects of religion in *China*. But the truth is, as I have already ſaid, we can very little depend upon the reports we have concerning thoſe unknown parts of the world. So that leaving the miracles of the religions of *Siam* and of *China*, till the Gentleman ſhall be pleaſed to let us know, what are the particulars he would incline to inſiſt upon, whereby one's aſſurance in the miracles of the Goſpel may be diminiſhed; I ſhall proceed to conſider, how far the other religions of antient *Rome*, and of *Turkey*, with which

which we are much better acquainted, can be underſtood to anſwer his purpoſe.

And what are thoſe miracles that ſo much abound in the religion of antient *Rome?* It would have been highly acceptable, had the Gentleman not reſted in generals, but expreſsly told us, what particular miracles he would here oppoſe to thoſe of the Goſpel. For my part, if, among his miracles, he does not count the *ancile*, the ſacred ſhield, which came down, it is ſaid, to *Numa* from heaven, and in memory of which they kept an yearly feſtival; the only miracle I know of, upon which the religion of antient *Rome* was originally founded, is *Numa*'s intercourſe with the goddeſs *Ægeria*. But, alas! however the herd of the people of that age were affected with ſuch miracles, wiſe men ſaw into the artifice (*d*); and now eſpecially, it is well underſtood, that as there never were in the univerſe any ſuch beings as the goddeſs *Ægeria*, thoſe miracles could be only the contrivance of Stateſmen and Politicians. There were indeed many events, ſome of them beyond all credibility, which the *Romans* regarded as omens and prodigies: But all the concern their religion had with ſuch events, was only to preſcribe what particular rites ſhould be obſerved in expiating thoſe prodigies, and in appeaſing the gods. Nor can it enter into any man's head to imagine, that they reſted the truth of their religion, or the certainty of its having come from heaven, upon the raining of fleſh, or of blood, or of ſtones, upon a cow's ſpeaking, or bringing forth a colt inſtead of a calf, and ſuch other ſtrange events real and pretended. But beſides thoſe prodigies, which, with the failing of people's credulity, came to fail in their credit and to be neglected (*e*); there were other events, which the *Romans* did likewiſe

(*d*) Liv. lib. 1. § 19. (*e*) Id. lib. 43. § 18.

conſider as miracles, and which, it may be apprehended, ſerved to aſſure them of the divinity of their religion. And, as the Gentleman is pleaſed to oppoſe the Popiſh as well as the Heathen miracles to thoſe of the Goſpel; and the Heathen worſhip and ceremonies ſeem, in a great meaſure, to be preſerved and continued in the Popiſh; I ſhall here, as I go along in obſerving ſome particulars relating to the religion of antient *Rome*, take notice of what may appear correſpondent in the religion of modern *Rome*; by which means, the Reader may be helped to a fuller view of the real value of our Popiſh miracles.

In *Numa*'s inſtitutions there were no images of the gods ſet up in their temples to be worſhipped or adored by the people. To ſhape and faſhion the gods, and thus to worſhip them, that wiſe Prince judged highly abſurd, and quite unſuitable to the nature and dignity of divine Beings. And this wiſe conſtitution was religiouſly obſerved, as *Plutarch* reports, for the ſpace of an hundred and ſeventy years (*f*). But human nature always affecting ſome ſenſible objects of worſhip, and deſigning men finding their intereſt in flattering the ſuperſtitious paſſions of mankind; images were introduced, and once introduced, they ſoon came to be miraculous, ſhewing the reſidence of the divinity they repreſented, in complaining of what they found offenſive (*g*); or, in expreſſing their approbation of what to them was agreeable; or in portending the approach of ſome public

(*f*) Plut. in Num. p. 65.

(*g*) The ſtory of the murder of Servius Tullius is well known. This is the language of his image:

——————— Vultus abſcondite noſtros,
Ne natæ videant ora nefanda meæ.
Ovid. Faſt. l. 6. § 615.

Nec

public calamity, by their weeping, or their falling into a ſweat, or their dropping with blood (*h*): And what is fully as wonderful, they had likewiſe among them ſome images, not made by mortal hands, but come down immediately from *Jupiter* (*i*). Events abundantly miraculous! And the Gentleman may tell the world, whether theſe are the miracles which he would compare with thoſe of the Goſpel.

Certain it is, that the church of *Rome*, imitating, one ſhould think, the Heathen, or meaning to ſhow, that the images of Chriſtian Saints are not inferior to the images of Heathen gods, have a great many miraculous images, that have been obſerved likewiſe

Nec minus voluntarius Junonis in urbem noſtram tranſitus. Captis a Furio Camillo Veiis, milites juſſu Imperatoris ſimulacrum Junonis Monetæ, in urbem Halaturi, ſede ſua movere conabantur. Quorum ab uno per jocum interrogata dea, an Romam migrare vellet, *Velle ſe reſpondit*. Hac voce audita, luſus in admirationem verſus eſt. Jamque non ſimulacrum, ſed ipſam cœlo Junonem petitam portare ſe credentes, læti in ea parte montis Aventini, in qua nunc templum ejus cernimus, collocaverunt. Val. Max. l. 1. cap. 8.

Having told us, that the image of Fortune is ſaid to have ſpoke twice to this purpoſe; Θεοφιλεῖ μὴ θεσμῷ γυναῖκες, δέδοκατε: Plutarch, as a Philoſopher, is of opinion, that 'tis impoſſible for any image to ſpeak; but he reckons it very poſſible for images to ſweat, to weep, and to ſhed blood. In Coriolan. p. 232.

(*h*) Cumis in arce Apollo triduum ac tres noctes lacrimavit. Liv. lib. 43. § 13.

Cœleſtes minæ territabant, quum humore continuo Fumanus Apollo ſudaret. Flor. l. 2. cap. 8.

Signa Lanuvii ad Junonis ſoſpitæ cruore manavere. Liv. lib. 23. § 31.

(*i*) Αὐτὸ μὲν τὸ ἄγαλμα διοπετὲς, ὡς λέγουσιν· ὅτε τὴν ὕλην, ὅτε τεχνητῶν ὅς τις ἐποίησεν, οὐδὲ ψαυσὸν χειρὸς ἀνθρωπίνης· τοῦτο δὲ παλαι μὲν ἐξ ὑραιοῦ κατενεχθῆναι λόγος. Herod. l. i. 35.

An

likewiſe to complain (*k*), to expreſs themſelves pleaſed (*l*); to weep, to be in a ſweat, and to ſhed blood (*m*): Nor are they without their images of no human compoſition, but of heavenly original (*n*). And ſuch miracles, with other articles, they make the ground upon which they go about, in general, to prove the divinity of their Chriſtian religion, and, in particular, to juſtify the worſhipping of Saints, and the adoration of their images (*o*). So

An image of Minerva, as well as this of the mother of the gods, came likewiſe from heaven; before which a gold lamp burning day and night, once filled with oil, wanted no ſupply all the year round. Pauſan. lib. i. cap. 26.

(*k*) Un religieux de cette Abbage (à Dijon) faiſant un ſoir ſa priere devant ſe crucifix, la ſtatuë de Jeſus Chriſt, qui y étoit attachée, lui parla & lui dit: "Mon bien aimé frere, couvre "moi, afin que je ne voye pas les iniquitez de mon peuple. Trompr. des Prêtr. tom. i. p. 27.

(*l*) Feruntur et aliæ ſacratiſſimæ Virginis imagines, quæ varia miracula ediderunt. *In particular*: Imaginem ſanctæ Mariæ cuſtodem eccleſiæ allocutam, et Alexii ſingularem pietatem commendaſſe. Durant. de rit. Ec. Cath. lib. 1. cap. 5. vid. Breviar. Feſt. Mart. 7. & Jul. 17.

(*m*) In the cathedral church at Lucca, there is a crucifix, which is obſerved frequently to weep, to ſpeak, and to bleed. And, in honour of this miraculous crucifix, they have ſtamped a piece of money, which they impiouſly call Jeſus Chriſt, and thereby expoſe this bleſſed name to be continually profaned and blaſphemed. Trompr. des Prêtr. tom. 1. p. 156.

Cum Judæus imaginem crucifixi contumelioſe verberaſſet, mox ſanguinis e vulneribus copioſe fuſus et ſparſus eſt. Durant. de rit. lib. 1. cap. 6.

(*n*) Extat et alia Chriſti Salvatoris imago Romæ, in ſacello ſive oratoria S. Laurentii, quæ Græce ἀχειροποίητος, id eſt, non manu hominis facta, dicitur. Id. ibid. cap. 5.

They have from heaven many images of the Virgin. And they tell us of an image of hers, before which a candle burns for many months without waſting. Id. ibid.

(*o*) Nous adorons les images des Saints d'une adoration reſpective au Saint que l'image nous repreſente. Les Raiſ. de l'

Offic.

So that here, indeed, there is a plain competition. And, as the miraculous images of Pagan and Popiſh *Rome* ſeem both of them of the ſame nature, and to be ſupported by equal degrees of evidence, they cannot but ſtand or fall together; unleſs, perhaps, thoſe of the church of *Rome* have it otherwiſe in their power to ſatisfy the impartial world, that their miraculous images are certain and real, whilſt thoſe of the Heathen are deceit and impoſture.

But as mankind, having once forſaken the paths of truth, can meet with no bounds to reſtrain their wandering, but go ſtill on in endleſs and infinite deviations; ſo *Numa* having admitted a plurality of gods, the *Romans* went on increaſing the number; which, not to mention other motives, their religious policy, in what they called the evocation of the enemies gods, ſeems to have made indiſpenſibly neceſſary (*p*). In ſhort, not only the public ſtate in peace and war, but private families, every particular claſs of men, all individuals at home and abroad, by land and ſea, in their ſerious affairs, in their diverſions, in their virtues and vices, in health and ſickneſs, when ſafe and in danger, in all circumſtances of life, had their particular gods, to whom they might addreſs themſelves as their ſpecial guardians and protectors. Nay, as if the men of thoſe days had been afraid of burdening any particular god with too much buſineſs, they parcelled out the human body among

Offic. & Cerem. &c. par Villett. p. 87. *In the preceeding page, this Gentleman informs us that,* Notre Sauveur eſt peint couronné d'un ſoliel de rayons, ſymbole de ſa divinité : Car il n'y a creature au monde qui approche de la divinité que le ſoliel. And if the ſun thus repreſents the Deity; why is not that luminary worſhipped in the church of Rome, with this relative adoration? The wooden images, or canvaſs-pictures repreſenting their Saints, have not ſo good, they can have no better title.

(*p*) Macrob. Saturnal. lib. iii, cap. 9.

among their deities, and allotted such a particular member of the body to the care of such a particular god, and such another particular member to the care of another (*q*). And amidst so much superstition, amidst this unbounded wildness of religious fancy, one may easily conceive a world of temples and images must have been erected. It being, however, impossible to have a temple with its proper service, for every particular deity; besides, their setting up different altars for different gods in the same temple dedicated to another god, thereby perhaps meaning to express the friendly society among the gods, or possibly to gratify some fanciful conceit of their own; they not only associated so many gods together, and dedicated a common temple, or a common altar to their honour (*r*), wherein their several images were placed; but they erected *Pantheons*, temples consecrated to all the gods, and furnished with a great number of images, having torches and incense, as in other temples, upon their altars. Nor is it to be doubted but their images were set off and enriched with the greatest profusion of dress and ornament, as one may judge from the image of *Jupiter*, whose garb and apparel, impiously robbed by *Dionysius* the Tyrant, was to the value of eighty-five talents of gold (*s*). And as they never failed to employ a great many ceremonies and a solemn form of words, in building or dedicating their temples and altars (*t*); so they were in use by yearly festivals to celebrate the dedication of some of them (*u*). But the Heathen had the altars and images of their gods, not

(*q*) Cels. apud Orig. lib. viii. p. 416.
(*r*) Pausan. lib. i. cap. 34.
(*s*) Ælian. Var. hist. lib. i. cap. 20.
(*t*) Tacit. hist. lib. iv. § 53.
(*u*) Ovid. Fast. lib. i. ver. 289.

not only in their temples, but in their houſes (*x*); in their ſtreets (*y*); by the highways (*z*); on mountains (*a*); and every where all over the country: And as almoſt every ſpot of ground was thus furniſhed with gods, ſo, whereſoever they met them, or came to have them in their view, in the highways, and every where elſe, they were ſure to pay them their devotion (*b*). And after ſuch a manner have

(*x*) Atque adorna ut rem divinam faciam, cum intro advenero, Laribus familiaribus, cum auxerunt noſtram familiam.
Plaut. in Rud. act. iv. ſc. 6.

At ego Deos Penates hinc ſalutatum domum divortor.
Terent. in Phorm. act. i. ſc. 5.

(*y*) Τὰ δὲ τῦ Διὸς καὶ τἄυτα ὄντα ἐν ὑπαίθρω—Ἐν μέσω δὲ τῆς ἀγορᾶς ἐστιν Ἀθηνᾶ χαλκῆ· τῷ βάθρῳ δὲ αὐτῆς ἔστι Μυσῶν ἀγάλματα ἐπειργασμένα. Pauſan. lib. ii. cap. 2, 3.

(*z*) Termine, ſive lapis, ſive es defoſſus in agro
Stipes, ab antiquis ſic quoque numen habes.
Ovid. Faſt. lib. ii. ver. 641.

Ἀθηναίοις δὲ καὶ ἔξω πόλεως ἐν τοῖς δήμοις, καὶ κατὰ τὰς ὁδὰς θεῶν ἐστιν ἱερὰ, καὶ ἡρώων καὶ ἀνδρῶν τάφοι. Pauſan. l. i. c. 29.

(*a*) Ἀθηναίοις δὲ τὰ ὄρη καὶ θεῶν ἀγάλματα ἔχει.
Id. l. i. c. 32.

(*b*) Ipſe ducem dederat, cum quo dum paſcua cuſtos,
Ecce lacu medio ſacrorum nigra favillis
Ara vetus ſtabat, tremulis circundata cannis.
Præſtitibus Maiæ Laribus videre calendæ
Aram conſtitui, ſignaque parva deûm.
Cauſa tamen poſiti fuerat cognominis illis,
Quod præſtant oculis omnia tuta ſuis.
Stant quoque pro nobis, et præſunt mœnibus urbis
Et ſunt præſentes, auxiliumque ferunt.
At canis ante pedes, ſaxo fabricatus eodem,
Stabat; quæ ſtandi cum Lare cauſa fuit?
Servat uterque domum, domino quoque fidus uterque:
Compita grata deo: Compita grata cani.
Ovid. Faſt. lib. v. ver. 129.

Reſtitit et parvo, faveas mihi, murmure dixit
Dux meus; et ſimili, faveas mihi, murmure dixi.
Ovid. Met. lib. vi. ver. 325

have matters been managed in the church of *Rome*, that one cannot well diſcern, how far they have receded from the religious inſtitutions of their Pagan anceſtors.

They have already admitted and canonized a great multitude of Saints, whom they regard as the patrons and protectors of nations, of cities, of families, and of particular perſons, in all their various circumſtances: And, as it may ſerve their purpoſes, they are ſtill taking the opportunity to canonize others; ſo that no bounds can be ſet to the religious objects of their worſhip. Every where they have particular churches dedicated to particular Saints, in which, beſides that of the tutelar Saint, they have other altars for other Saints. Some Saints, likewiſe, they have aſſociated together, to whom one common church is ſacred. And the *Rotonda*, a church in *Rome*, the Heathen *Pantheon*, formerly conſecrated to *Jove* and all the gods, now ſtands re-conſecrated to the bleſſed Virgin and all the Saints (*c*). In all which churches they have likewiſe their ſacred images, with their proper altars lighted with tapers, and ſmoaking with incenſe (*d*). Nor, in the richneſs of their dreſs and ornaments, can ſome of the images of the church of *Rome*, be counted inferior to thoſe of the Heathen. The *Madonna* of *Loretto*, in

(*c*) Templum illud (Pantheon) daemonibus dicatum, Bonifacius IV. Pontifex in honorem B. Virginis, omniumque Martyrum, feliciter conſecravit. Durant. de ritib. lib. i. cap. 24.

(*d*) It is the doctrine of Popiſh Rome, that the burning of incenſe drives away dæmons effectually: Suffitus, ſeu turificatio ad fugandos daemones efficax eſt. Id. ibid. cap. 9. But Pagan Rome taught the contrary, and were perſuaded, that by the ſteams of incenſe their deities and dæmons were highly feaſted, and ſtrongly allured:

Illic plurima naribus duces thura. Hor. od. 1. lib. iv.

Vid. Porph. de abſt. lib. ii.

in particular, an image of wood of about four feet and an half high, its face frightfully black, and its body all over worm-eaten, by which they mean to represent the Virgin *Mary*, is always magnificently dressed out, and is possessed of a wardrobe of immense value (*e*). In the dedication of their churches

(*e*) Mr. D'Emiliane happened to be present at the undressing of this image, in order to its change of habit for Sunday. His account of this extravagant piece of superstition is abundantly curious. He then tells us of the splendor of its dress, and the greatness of its riches.

On la revêtit d'un habit verd extrémement riche. C' étoit un ouvrage à fleurs, sur un fond d' or. Le voile qu'on lui mit sur la tête, étoit encore plus precieux ; car outre qu' il etoit de la même étoffe, il étoit tout semé de grosses perles fines : Aprés quoi on lui mit sur la tête une couronne d' or, chargée de pierres precieuses d'un prix inestimable. On lui mit ensuite son collier, ses pendans d' oreilles, et ses braceletes de diamans, et plusieurs grosses chaines d' or au col, ou etoient attachez un grand nombre de cœurs, et de medailles d' or, qui sont des presens que des Reïnes et des Princesses Catholiques y ont énvoyez par devotion, pour témoigner qu' elles vouloient être esclaves de cette statuë. Tout l' ornement de l' autel etoit egalement somptueux et magnifique. Ce n' étoit que vases, bassins, lampes, et chandeliers d' or et d' argent enrichis de pierreries. Tout ceci, a la faveur d' une grande quantité de cierges qui y brulent jour et nuit, rendoit un éclat dont la beauté raviſſoit l' ame par les yeux.——— Les personnes riches font des grands presens à la statuë de bois de la Vierge, qui est appellée sans aucune addition ou modification la Sainte Vierge de Lorette. Ils lui donnent des colliers, et des bracelets de perles, de diamans, des cœurs d'or, des medailles, des chandeliers, des lampes, et des tableaux en relief d' or et d' argent, d' une grandeur et pesanteur prodigieuse. Plusieurs lui envoyent des anneaux, et de tres-precieux joyaux pour l' epouser. Elle a plus de cinquante robbes d' un prix inestimable, sans celles que l' on defait tous les jours au profit de Prêtres, lorsqu' elles lui ont un peu servi. De sorte qu' elle est aujourd'hui la plus riche catin de l' univers, et le morceaux de bois, le plus richement paré qu' il y ait dans le monde. C' est à cette statuë que furent adressées ces Litanies si fameuses, et si fort en usage dans l' eglise de Rome, que l' on appelle communement, les Litanies de la Vierges, ou bien, les Litanies de nôtre Dame de Lorette,

and altars, beſide many other ceremonies ſo ſenſeleſs and extravagant, that only the wild caprice of ſuperſtition could ſuggeſt them, they employ a conſiderable quantity of holy water in waſhing or ſprinkling the altar and walls of the church; at the ſame time, as if the devil were in actual poſſeſſion of every part of God's creation, *exorciſing* the materials of which church and altar are built (*f*). And from their *Breviary*

Lorette, ou elle eſt appellée Reine des Anges, Mere de la Grace divine, Porte du ciel, Aide des Chrétiens, Refuge des pêcheurs, &c. Tous ces precieux ornemens, et ces beaux titres n' empêchent pourtant pas les vers de faire leur office. Hiſt. des Tromp. des Prêtr. tom. i. p. 223.

To this image of the Queen of heaven (ſo they blaſpheme) among the Papiſts, the Reader may poſſibly think, that the image of Jupiter the King of heaven (ſo they blaſpheme) among the Heathen, is not an improper match: Καθέζεται μὲν δὴ ὁ Θεὸς ἐν θρόνῳ χρυσῦ πεποιημένος ἐκ ἐλέφαντος. στέφανος δὲ ἐπίκειταί οἱ τῇ κεφαλῇ, μεμιμημένος ἐλάιας κλῶνας. ἐν μὲν δὴ τῇ δεξιᾷ φέρει Νίκην ἐξ ἐλέφαντος καὶ ταύτην καὶ χρυσῦ, ταινίαν τε ἔχουσαν, καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ στέφανον· τῇ δὲ ἀριστερᾷ τὸ θεῦ χάριέν ἐστι σκῆπτρον μετάλλοις τοῖς πᾶσιν ἠνθισμένον. ὁ δὲ ὄρνις ὁ ἐπὶ τῷ σκήπτρῳ καθήμενος ἐστὶν ὁ ἀετός. χρυσῦ δὲ καὶ τὰ ὑποδήματα τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἱμάτιον ὡσάυτως ἐστί. τῷ δὲ ἱματίῳ ζῴδια τε καὶ τῶν ἀνδρῶν τὰ κρίνα ἐστὶν ἐμπεποιημένα. κ. λ. Pauſan. l. viii. c. 11.

This image or ſtatue was the work of Phidias, who, after he had finiſhed it, beſeeching Jove to grant ſome teſtimony of his approbation, immediately it thundered, and the thunder ſtruck the pavement of the temple. Whether the Popiſh image can pretend to any ſuch teſtimony in its favour, I know not: But the houſe where it ſtands and is worſhipped, is, by far more miraculous. It is, they ſay, the very houſe where the Angel Gabriel found the Virgin Mary, when he delivered to her his meſſage from heaven, and where ſhe lived with her Son, and her huſband Joſeph, for the ſpace of thirty years. And this very houſe, they pretend, was, by the Angels, at the command of the Virgin, tranſported out of Nazareth from one place to another, till it came to reſt where it now is!

(*f*) Villet. Les Rais. de l' Office et Ceremon. &c. p. 59, &c.

viary we learn, that they keep anniverſary feſtivals, in commemorating the dedication of ſome of their churches. Neither are their ſacred images confined to their churches; they have them likewiſe in their houſes for their private devotion. And in their ſtreets, by the highways, on rocks and mountains, in all places whether inhabited or not, they have their croſſes, and the altars and images of their Saints, erected as the common objects of their religious worſhip, every where, as it were, near at hand, to favour and protect them; and which therefore they do not fail in ſome ſort or other, as they happen to ſee them, in paſſing along the road, or any where elſe, to reverence and adore (*g*). Thus far, therefore, the Heathen ceremonies ſeem to be preſerved and retained in the Popiſh. Only, as in my apprehenſion, that particular god, to which the antient *Romans* dedicated any particular temple, was, with good reaſon, at leaſt, the principal object of worſhip in that temple; if our modern *Romans* can pretend they follow another courſe, therein, I muſt own, they have ſo far departed from the practice of their Heathen anceſtors. At the ſame time, to dedicate a church to a particular Saint, who then becomes its proper patron and protector, and yet in that very church not to pay the chief honours to that particular Saint, has ſomething in it that appears to me very abſurd and inconſiſtent, at leaſt, very

(*g*) Hanc crucem, ſcilicet, ubique celebrari videre licet. In domibus, in foro, in ſolitudine, in viis, in montibus, in collibus, in vallibus, in mari.——Omnes de ea ſoliciti ſunt, et ubique fulget, et ſparſa eſt: In parietibus domorum, in culminibus, in libris, in civitatibus, in vicis, in locis quae habitantur, et quae non habitantur, ſanctae imagines et cruces in publicis viis eriguntur, et nos quidem propter Deum, et puram erga Sanctos ejus fidem, ſancta ejuſmodi ubique erecta adoramus et ſalutamus. Durant. de Ritib. lib. i. cap. 6.

very rude and unmannerly. The old *Romans* had certainly a juſter notion of decency. And I cannot but think, that the conſecrating of churches to Saints, did, in ſome meaſure, pave the way for the worſhipping of Saints and their images.

But, the Pagans of old *Rome*, ſo very religious in the multiplicity of their gods, and in the number of their temples and images, were no leſs devout and ſuperſtitious in the public acts of their worſhip; particularly in their ſupplications or religious proceſſions, when they offered up their thankſgivings to the gods for any joyful or ſucceſsful event, or were deprecating their diſpleaſure when afflicted or threatened with any public calamity: In ſome of thoſe public acts of their devotion (for they had them of many different forms) having the images of their gods along with them, they marched in ſolemn pomp, from one temple to another, making their proper ſtations by the way, clothed in long veſtments, ſinging all the while ſacred hymns, with garlands on their heads, and wax-candles or torches, and ſometimes laurel branches in their hands (*h*): They were in uſe likewiſe in ſome of their feſtivals, to expoſe to public view their richeſt furniture, and whatever they had, in art or nature, that was grand or curious, and could add luſtre to the pomp (*i*). And what added greatly to the ſolemnity, beſides their public feaſts in their temples, they ſometimes kept open houſe, when all perſons, citizens and ſtranger, known and unknown, were made welcome; and upon ſuch occaſions, no doubt, thoſe of higher rank would, in every inſtance, diſplay their hoſpitality (*k*).

Such

(*h*) Liv. lib. xxvii. § 39. lib. xl. § 37. Pauſan. lib. ii. cap. 7. 35.

(*i*) Herod. lib. i. § 32.

(*k*) Liv. lib. v. § 13.

Such was the conduct of the Heathen in their religious processions: And that these holy processions are still continued in the church of *Rome*, and celebrated much after the same manner, the world needs not be told. In all Popish countries one has access to see them, likewise in great variety. And, as in some of these solemnities, they are dressed in long, white garments, and sing sacred hymns, and have palms in their hands, and wax-candles and tapers, making proper stations as they march along (*l*); so particularly in their festival of the holy Sacrament, they make a public shew and parade of all their best furniture, they keep open house, and every body is made welcome (*m*). But how well soever Popish and

(*l*) Durant. de Ritib. cap. 10. En nos processions, pour prendre haleine et courage, l'eglise fait halte, s'arreste tantost à la nef, tantost devant un autel. Villet. Les Raif. de l'Office. &c. p. 530.

(*m*) La fête du S. Sacrement ayant été instituée pour faire triompher l'Hostie en depit des Heretiques, comme disent les Papistes, ils n'oublient rien pour rendre ce jour là, et tout l'octave qui suit, plus pompeuse et plus solennelle.——En France l'on rend tout le dehors des maisons de belles tapesseries, on jonche les ruës d'herbes odoriferantes et de fleurs; on dresse des oratoires ou reposoirs (comme ils les appellent) pour faire reposer le Saint Sacrement, comme s'il étoit bien las; on habille un infinité de petits enfans en Anges, pour lui jetter des fleurs, et lui donner de l'encens: Enfin on fait dans les ruës mille prosternations et adorations idolâtres.——Mais l'Italie comme la plus ingenieuse, et aussi la plus superstitieuse, l'emporte de beaucoup par dessus tous les autres païs Catholiques Romains. Boulogne entr'autres s'y est renduë remarquable par sa fameuse octave du S. Sacrement.—Les Boulonnois sont extremement curieux en peinture: Tous leurs cabinets, leurs sales et leurs chambres en sont pleines, et comme ils les produisent dans les ruës cet octave là, on a la satisfaction d'y voir de fort belles pieces.——Les maisons des grands Seigneurs sont toutes ouvertes ces jours là, et ils sont eu soin de faire parer magnifiquement toutes leurs chambres, et d'y mettre en vûë toutes leurs richesses. Il y en a quelques-uns qui sont si splendides et si liberaux qu'ils donnent des raffraichissemens, qu'ils

and Pagan ceremonies may correſpond and tally together in other circumſtances, as their religious objects are different, the ſacred things carried in their proceſſions muſt likewiſe be different.

Thus, for example, among the Pagans, in their feſtival kept in memory of the *Ancile* which *Numa* had from heaven, the Heathen Prieſts, in their proceſſion, danced along, carrying the ſacred ſhields: And, among the Papiſts, in their feſtival celebrated in honour of a *Nail*, which, they ſay, is one of thoſe nails that nailed the bleſſed *Jeſus* to the croſs, and which was laſt taken out of *Conſtantine*'s horſe-bridle, the Popiſh Prieſts, in this very ſolemn and ſplendid proceſſion, carry the ſacred Nail, appearing thro' a beautiful chryſtal, mounted on a large pedeſtal of pure gold, exquiſitely wrought, and richly adorned with precious ſtones, to which, as it paſſes along, the people *bow the knee*, and pay their adoration. Thus likewiſe, in place of the images of Heathen gods, carried in the Pagan proceſſions, the church of *Rome* have in their proceſſions the reliques or the images of their Saints, whom, at the ſame time, in the old *Roman* language, they ſtill affect to call *Divi* and

qu' ils appellent *Sorbetti*, à tout le monde, ou au moins aux perſonnes tant ſoit peu conſiderables. Et dans leurs courts, ou leurs jardins, ils ont des fontaines qui jettent du vin en abondance pour le menu peuple.——Ils font de plus des repreſentations de toutes les figures de l' Ancien Teſtament, qu' ils croyent avoir prefiguré leur S. Sacrement.—Ils repreſentent tous les Prophetes et toutes les Sybilles qui ont prophetiſé de nôtre Seigneur. Ils font paroitre enſuite la Vierge et les douze Apôtres, et nôtre Seigneur qui ſuit avec un pain dans ſa main, comme s' il le vouloit rompre comme il fit dans la ſainte cene —Apres tout cet attirail, ſuivent les Prêtres magnifiquement revêtus, et puis le S.Sacrement, qui eſt porté ſous un riche dais, environné d' une infinité de jeunes garçons et de jeunes filles, habillez en Anges, qui lui jettent des fleurs. Proche du dais il y a toujours une fort bonne muſique, &c. Hiſt. des Tromp. des Prêt. tom. ii. p. 174.—180.

and *Divæ*, *gods* and *goddeſſes*; as if they meant to make a ſhew of deviating in nothing from the inſtitutions of paganiſm. And, indeed, ſo fond are they of correſponding with the Heathen in matters of religion, that, among the *Jewiſh* Prophets, perſonated in their proceſſion of the holy Sacrament, they repreſent or perſonate the Heathen *Sibyls*. Upon which I muſt beg leave to obſerve, that, although in ſome of their religious proceſſions, the Heathen, for ſport and diverſion, did perſonate other characters (*n*); yet I cannot recollect they were ever ſo profane (whatever liberties they might take upon the ſtage, and ſometimes at their private entertainments (*o*),) as in ſuch circumſtances to perſonate their gods, as the Papiſts do their Saints, and even *Jeſus Chriſt* himſelf, in the moſt outrageous and impious manner (*p*).

But

(*n*) Herodian. lib. i. § 32.

(*o*) Suet. in Auguſt. cap. 70.

(*p*) Puiſque je ſuis inſenſiblement tombé ſur les proceſſions qui ſe font à Milan, je ne puis m' émpêcher de vous faire la deſcription d' une des plus fameuſes qui s' y pratiquent la nuit du Vendredi Saint. Cela ſe fait aux flambeaux, dans l' ordre qui ſuit: Apres la croix et la banniere, ſuivent les porteurs de croix. Ce ſont des gens qui portent de grandes croix ſur leurs epaules, de la longueur de 15 ou 20 pieds.——Ils font cela par un eſprit de penitence, et pour imiter nôtre Seigneur Jeſus Chriſt, lorſqu' il porta ſa croix au Calvaire. Ils ſont bien au nombre de trois ou quatre cens; la plûpart d' entr' eux ont la corde au cou, et de groſſes chaines aux pieds, qui traînent ſur le pavé, et font un bruit epouvantable. Ils ont le viſage caché avec de grands capuchons.——Au milieu de ces porteurs de croix, on portoit dans un brancard, une figure de nôtre Seigneur allant au Calvaire.

Aprés ces porteurs de croix ſuivoient les Diſciplineurs. Ils avoient de même le viſage couvert avec leurs grands capuchons, et ayant le dos tout decouvert, avec de groſſes diſciplines qu' ils tenoient des deux mains, ils ſe battoient continuellement, et faiſoient decouler le ſang de leurs epaules d' une maniere qui faiſoit horreur à la nature. On portoit de même au milieu de ces fouetteurs,

But that which may be thought more nearly to relate to our preſent argument, concerns the vows, the gifts and offerings, which the antient *Romans* made to their deities. And herein we every where ſee the mighty influence which religion then had over all characters and what a powerful ſenſe they entertained of their dependence upon their gods. In the caſe of any public undertaking, with reſpect to peace or war, they not only conſulted the gods concerning their approbation; but, in order to gain and ſecure their protection, they made ſolemn vows of temples, and altars, and other monuments, and valuable gifts, to be conſecrated to their ſervice and honour. And juſt ſo, under any public calamity, and in the caſe of prodigies, they not only conſulted their ſacred books, how the anger of the gods might be appeaſed, but they likewiſe made vows and offerings to conciliate their favour. Such, in relation to

fouetteurs, qui étoient en tres-grand nombre, une figure de la flagillation de nôtre Seigneur attaché a la colonne. Enſuite on voyoit venir pluſieurs compagnies de ſoldats qui portoient leurs mouſquets et leurs piques la pointe renverſée en bas, et leurs etendarts de meme. Tous les tambours etoient couverts de drap noir, et ils les battoient par deſſus le drap, ce qui rendoit un ſon fort lugubre. Aprés les ſoldats, ſuivoit une figure vivante de nôtre Seigneur; c' etoit un jeune homme, revêtus d' une grande robbe de pourpre, avec une couronne d' epines ſur ſa tête, et qui portoit une grande croix ſur ſes epaules. Il y avoit environ une vingtaine de garçons autour de lui, habilez en Juifs, qui faiſoient cent poſtures et grimaces ridicules. On ne pouvoit pas s' empêcher de rire à un ſpectacle qui auroit dû attendrir les cœurs, parce que rarement les repreſentations ſaintes chez les Papiſtes ſont exemptes de profanation. On ne ſe mettoit point à genoux devant cette figure, parce qu' elle étoit vivante. Elle étoit ſuivie de toutes les confrairies de la ville: Qui ſont en tres-grand nombre. Ils marchoient deux à deux. avec des cierges allumez en leurs mains; et aprés eux ſuivoit une autre figure de nôtre Seigneur dans le tombeau. Lorſqu' elle paſſa, quoi qu' elle ne fut que de bois, tout le monde ſe mettoit à genoux dans les ruës pour l' adorer, &c. Hiſt. des Tromp. des Prêtr. tom. ii. p. 208.

to the gods, were the diſpoſitions of the public, as they happened to be ſituated. And, after the ſame manner,

When private perſons were about to engage in any matter which they thought of conſequence, when they were to travel by land or ſea, when they were in danger, or had met with any calamity, when in ſickneſs, or in any ailment of body, or in any diſtreſs whatſoever, wanting favour or relief, for themſelves or their friends, in theſe circumſtances they made their addreſſes to the gods, in hopes of their protection and ſuccour, they ſent up their vows, and in acknowledgement of the protection and ſuccour received, they made their vows effectual.

Thus, not only were temples and altars vowed and dedicated, but the temples came to be enriched with votive gifts and offerings, and to have their walls all hung with tables and pictures narrating or repreſenting the particular favours which the gods had vouchſafed to their votaries. Nay, frequently, in the caſe of their being affected in any particular member of the body, when they happened to be relieved, they made the form or figure of that member in what kind of matter they judged proper; and this they devoted in teſtimony of their deliverance. So that one might ſee legs and arms, and other parts of the human body, as votive offerings to the gods, hanging up in their temples. Withal it may be obſerved, that as the hands, particularly, were offered up on other accounts, they do not always expreſs, that the donor was affected in that particular member.

Of the truth of all this we are aſſured from antient inſcriptions, and from common hiſtory. In particular, we learn from *Cicero*, that a number of

pictures were to be seen in temples representing the deliverance, which, in answer to their vows, many people in storms at sea had obtained from the gods (*q*). And *Livy* tells us, that "the temple of "*Æsculapius* was once rich in offerings from the "sick and diseased, in consideration of the cures "they had received (*r*)." Those offerings, however, and tables, and pictures, were not all of them the effects of vows; they were some of them, no doubt, the pure expressions of devotion; and many of them the effects of gratitude, for the relief the gods had been pleased to afford to the distressed, by instructing them in dreams, and visions, and admonitions, how they might be relieved. Of this we have abundant proof likewise from antient inscriptions. And *Strabo* lets us know, that the temple of *Æsculapius* at *Epidaurus* was always full of sick people; and that the walls were all hung with tables, on which the cures performed were inscribed (*s*). And it should seem, that, in those temples, where proper places were appointed for the purpose, they commonly spent the night, that in dreams and visions, they might be directed to a proper cure (*t*). Nor

(*q*) Tu, qui deos putas humana negligere, nonne animadvertis ex tot tabulis pictis, quam multi votis vim tempestatis effugerint, in portumque salvi pervenerint? Ita sit, inquit, illi enim nusquam picti sunt, qui naufragia fecerunt in marique perierunt. Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. 3. 37.

(*r*) Nunc vestigiis revulsorum donorum, tum donis dives erat, quæ remediorum salutarium ægri mercedem sacraverant. Liv. lib. 45. 28.

(*s*) Καὶ τὸ ἱερὸν πλῆρες ἀεὶ τῶν τεκαμνόντων, ἢ τῶν ἀνακειμένων πινάκων, ἐν οἷς ἀναγεγραμμένας τυγχάνουσιν αἱ θεραπειαι καθάπερ ἐν Κῷ τε ἢ Τριπῃ Strab. lib. 8. p. 360.

(*t*) Τῷ ναῷ δὲ ἐστι πέραν, ἔνθα οἱ ἰκέται τῷ θεῷ καθεύδουσιν, Pausan. lib. 2. cap. 27.

Nor did they dream for themselves only, but for other people likewise, particularly in the temple of *Serapis* (*u*).

Now, all the instances of this protection and relief, which people in danger, or distress, or in other circumstances, had the folly to imagine their Heathen gods had afforded them, were counted miracles. If these, therefore, are the miracles which the Gentleman means we should compare with these of the Gospel, 'tis needless to tell the world, how far they can stand in competition. I shall here only, in the case of two blind men, give the Reader a specimen of the manner wherein these miracles were worked. And, as I have not *Gruter*'s *Inscriptions*, I shall transcribe the first of them from *Montfaucon's Antiquities*, which I had in a present from my noble Patron the Earl of *Ilay*, now his Grace *Archibald* Duke of *Argyll*, a distinguished ornament of his country, and a great encourager not only of learning, but of every art and manufacture that can tend to the polishing of human life, and the promoting the public interests, the common good of mankind. The case is this;

" *Æsculapius*, by his oracle, prescribed to *Gaius*, " a blind man, to approach the holy altar; to sup- " plicate; to pass from the right to the left; to lay " his five fingers upon the altar; to lift up his hand " and put it on his eyes: Immediately he recovered " his sight; the people present greatly rejoicing " that such mighty deeds were done under our Em- " peror

(*u*) Κάνωβός δ' ἐστι πόλις—ἔχουσα τὸ τῦ Σαραπιδος ἱερὸν, πολλῇ ἁγισίᾳ τιμώμενον, ᾗ θεραπείας ἐκφέρον, ὡσε ᾗ τυς ἐλλογιμωτάτυς ἀνδρας πιστευειν, ᾗ ἐγκομασθαι αὐτὸς ὑπὲρ ἑαυτῶν ἢ ἑτερων συγράφυσι δὲ τινες ᾗ τὰς θεραπείας, ἄλλοι δὲ ἀρετὰς τῶν ἐνταυθα λογιων. Strab. lib. xvii. p. 759.

" peror *Antonine*." This is the moſt conſiderable miracle of thoſe four that are inſcribed in this table of *Æſculapius*. And in ſuch inſtances, the learned *Montfaucon* has obſerved, that the devil, or rather the Prieſts, have found means to impoſe groſsly upon mankind (*x*) In the mean time, this table, though it is ſet in that light, can be no votive offering. From the form and ſtile, it contains, as it were, a Phyſician's *Recipé*, with an account of the ſucceſs of the preſcription, taken down, I ſuppoſe, by the Prieſts, and hung up in the temple. For, in the paſſage a little before tranſcribed in the margin, *Strabo* informs us, that ſome people in the temple of *Serapis* were thus employed. Preciſely of the ſame nature were thoſe inſcriptions upon ſome pillars, which *Pauſanias* ſaw in the temple of this god at *Epidaurus*. They expreſſed the names of the ſick people; what were their ſeveral diſeaſes; and the method of their cure. And, what is very remarkable, there was there likewiſe a pillar a-part, with an inſcription, bearing, that *Æſculapius* had raiſed *Hippolytus* from the dead (*y*).

The other inſtance of a miraculous cure performed by *Æſculapius* is this: " *Phalyſius*, a particular vo- " tary of this god, being ſo greatly diſtreſſed with " ſore eyes, that he was almoſt blind, *Æſculapius* " appears to *Anyte* in a dream, giving her a ſealed " letter, which ſhe ſhould carry to *Phalyſius*. The " dream was a reality: For, awaking, ſhe found " the letter in her hand. Upon this, therefore,

" *Anyte*

(*x*) On y voit ou les ruſes du démon pour tromper les gens trop credules, ou peut être la fourberie des Prêtres des faux dieux, qui apoſtoient des gens pour feindre des maladies & des gueriſons miraculeuſes. Montfauc. L'antiquet. tom. 2. part. 1. Liv. 4. chap. 6

(*y*) Pauſan. lib. 2. cap. 27.

" *Anyte* takes ſhip, and, arriving at *Naupactum*, " delivers the letter to *Phalyſius*, deſiring him to " break it open and read it. To read it! This, in " his preſent condition, *Phalyſius* thought impoſ- " ſible. But reflecting, that, peradventure, the " god had ſent him ſomething ſalutary, he opens the " letter, and looking into it, immediately his eyes " become whole: And the money demanded in the " letter, he gives to *Anyte* (z)." This the Reader may think a very extraordinary event. And, indeed 'tis the only event, I know of, among the Heathen, of ſending a miracle by letter. It puts one in mind of *Gregory Thaumaturgus*, his ſending a written meſſage to ſome devils to return to a Heathen temple, out of which he had expelled them. I ſhall only add:

In ſuch a number of deities, whereof ſeveral had, as it were, the ſame profeſſion, or were good to the ſame purpoſes; and whereof ſome might be offended and others not; 'tis impoſſible but people muſt have been at a great uncertainty, to which of them they ſhould addreſs themſelves, and make their ſupplications. For this reaſon, therefore, guided by fancy, or pretending to have conſulted their ſacred books, the *Roman* Conſuls, or *Decemviri*, or the College of Prieſts, *&c.* were wont, one or other of them, upon public occaſions, to advertiſe the people, to what particular deities they ſhould ſupplicate, and offer ſacrifice (a). And as, in relation to their private

(z) Ελπίζων δέ τι ἐκ τῦ Ἀσκληπιῦ χρηςὸν, ἀφαιρεῖ τὴν σφραγίδα, ϗ ἰδὼν ἐς τὸν κηρον, ὑγιης τε ἦν, δίδωσι τῇ Ἀνύτῃ τὸ ἐν τῇ δέλτῳ γεγραμμένον, ϛατῆρας διχιλίας χρυσᾶ. Id. lib. 10. cap. ult.

(a) Editi a collegio Pontificum Dii quibus ſacrificaretur. Liv. lib. 30. § 3. Decemviri juſſi adire libros: edidere quibus Diis, et quot hoſtiis ſacrificaretur. Id. lib. 40. § 45.

vate concernments, every man being left to his own choice, and in such a choice having nothing to guide him but mere conceit and imagination, people could not but be as uncertain, to which of the gods they should address themselves, as their best patrons and protectors; so when they happened in any circumstances, particularly in time of danger or distress, to come where any god had his residence, either his temple, his altar, or his image, they directly applied to that god for favour; and if they knew him not, they addressed him under the general character of a god; and, whoever he was, devoutly implored his protection (*b*). And, whilst people were thus at an uncertainty, as to the particular deity under whose immediate protection they should put themselves; 'tis not to be doubted, but different Priests, not always free from the spirit of emulation, did use their endeavours to prevent each other in gaining votaries to their different deities: Which happened likewise, we may believe, in the case of the Priests of the same god, upon their having separate interests from their belonging to different temples.

Such now was the devotion of the Heathen towards their gods, and such were the favours with which it was rewarded. And, in their devotion towards the Saints and images, is not the church of *Rome* openly pursuing the same measures, and every where reaping the same advantages? They honour their Saints with churches, and altars, and oratories, built and consecrated to their service, and visibly possessed by their images. And, as they are well assured that their Saints and their images are able to work

(*b*) Nunc, quisquis est deus, veneror, ut nos ex hac ærumna eximat miseras; Inopes, ærumnosas, aliquo auxilio adjuvet. Plaut. in Rud. Act. 1. Scen. 4.

work miracles, they every where devoutly regard them as the objects of their adoration (*c*), putting up to them prayers, interceſſions, and thankſgivings for themſelves and others: In time of danger, particularly, or when they are involved in any diſtreſs or calamity, they then fervently invocate their aid and protection: They ſend up their vows: In viſions and dreams they either have immediate relief, or they are directed how to obtain it (*d*): They make offerings; and they hang up, or repreſent in their churches, the favours or bleſſings which their Saints or images have been pleaſed to vouchſafe them.

(*c*) Miraculis etiam imaginem veneratio illuſtratur. —— Extra omnem controverſiam eſt, Sanctorum imagines mirifica deſignare miracula, ut et debilibus valetudo bona per eos concilietur, ſæpeque in ſomniis apparentes optima quæque nobis conſulant. Durant. de Retib. lib. 1. cap. 5.

(*d*) Diaconus, Ebrardus nomine, febris anhelæ vexabatur æſtibus; qui hujus ægritudinis agitatus angoribus, — feſſus reſidebat, dum Miſſæ celebrarentur myſteria. Cui vi febrium fatigato, ſopor irruit: Et ecce videt beatam dei Genetricem ſibi adſtantem, impoſitaque manu ejus capiti pertranſiſſe, et poſt altare ſeſe viſa eſt intuliſſe. Mox ille patefactis oculis ſurgit, finitiſque myſteriis, jam ſanus Omen reſpondit. Fiodoard. Hiſt. lib. 3. cap. 6. vid. lib. 1. cap. 24.

Quidem cæcus, nomine Paulus, admonitus in ſomnis, ut ad eandem pergeret eccleſiam lumen ibi recepturus, advenit; et recuperator lumine, nec mora videns abſcedit. Id. ibid. lib. 4. cap. 48. vid. lib. 2. cap. 15.

I cannot but here obſerve, that a remedy, very much reſembling that mentioned above, in the caſe of a blind man cured by Æſculapius, is preſcribed for the tooth-ach. Here the patient is directed to proſtrate himſelf before the altar of the B. Virgin; to ſupplicate to her, with all earneſtneſs, for pity; then to riſe up, and to kiſs the altar, and upon the bare marble to lay the affected part; after this to return home, to cover his body all over with cloaths, and to compoſe himſelf to ſleep. This is the preſcription. But ſo unfortunately were things then ſituated, that at the very time he was devoutly following the preſcription, the Virgin herſelf happened not to be preſent at her altar. Happy therefore for the poor

them (*e*). The *Virgin Mary*, whom they ſtile the *Queen of Heaven, the Queen of Angels and of Men, and the Miſtreſs of the Univerſe*, is indeed the prevailing object of their worſhip; and in this honour ſhe is now pretty well ſecured by the common uſe of their Roſary. But, from among ſuch a multiplicity of Saints, whereof ſome are ſuppoſed more powerful in conferring one kind of bleſſing, and ſome in conferring another (*f*); as people are left to chuſe thoſe of them whom their own fancy may ſuggeſt to them, or from whom they may promiſe themſelves moſt good or readieſt protection; ſo, although by their rituals they are inſtructed to what particular Saints they ſhall pay their anniverſary devotions, and upon all extraordinary occaſions, are advertiſed by their Prieſts, in what they call their *Prones*, who is the Saint, in the acknowledging, or in the invocating of whoſe favour and protection, they ſhall immediately addreſs themſelves in their ſupplications and proceſſions;

poor man! the Virgin is pleaſed to appear to him in his ſleep, and, with great compaſſion, having touched the affected part, ſhe makes an apology for her abſence, when he lay proſtrate before her altar, and bids him reſt confident, he is now cured. Sicque celerrime redditus ſoſpitati, ſæpe poſtea fidenter adſtipulabatur, non ſe ulterius eſſe paſſurum talia, quem tanta ſaluti reſtituiſſet domina. Quod et revera illi accidit, ut deinceps hujuſmodi ægritudinem nequaquam ſenſerit, dum pluribus poſtmodum vixerit annis. Id. ibid. lib. 3. cap. 6

(*e*) Pol. Virg. de Juv. Rer. lib. 5. cap. 1.

(*f*) In the dedication of his ſermons, it is ſaid of St Borromeo, that, happy in heaven, and adored upon altars on earth, the whole church invoke his glorious and powerful protection; but that eſpecially the Paſtors of the people have recourſe to him for his ſupport and direction in the diſcharge of their office, as he had therein ſignalized himſelf very particularly. Beato in cielo, e per l' eroiche virtù ſue adorato in terra ſopra gli altari,—la chieſa tutta ne invoca il glorioſo e potente patrocinio. e i paſtori de popoli a lui recorrono per eſſere ajutati a ben cuſtodire le loro greggie, ſendo egli ſtato in queſta parte ſegnalatiſſimo.

ceſſions; yet, in what relates to their own private concernments, they are ſometimes at a loſs to know to which of their Saints they ſhall apply (*g*). And muſt they not herein be ſtill at a greater loſs, on account of the rivalſhip, which their Prieſts, for their own profit, have introduced among their Saints; ſome pretending, that ſuch a Saint, whoſe image or reliques are in their poſſeſſion, has, in point of working miracles, the advantage beyond ſuch another Saint, whoſe remains are in the hands of others (*h*); and even pretending, that the ſame Saint is more favourable, or works more or greater miracles with them, than any where elſe? But, be that as it will, our Popiſh Saints and images have performed no greater wonders, they have afforded no better protection to their votaries, than the Heathen pretend to have received from their gods and goddeſſes. And of the credibility of all thoſe miracles, hung up or repreſented, whether in Heathen temples, or Popiſh churches, every ſound-headed man, having any juſt notion of God and of religion, muſt at once be ſenſible.

(*g*) Here is a pretty odd conceit, in order to find out, which is the Saint one had beſt to apply to:

Mulier quædam, nomine Audinga, febribus attrita, hæc apud ſe ſuper recuperanda ſibi ſanitate feciſſe traditur experimenta. Tres enim candelas unius fecit quantitatis, quarum unam nomine ſancti Theoderici, alteram ſancti Theodulfi, tertiam ſancti Rigoberti conſtituit: quas ſimul accendens, quæ ſuperaret ardendo, probare diſpoſuit. Quo facto, dum ſuperdurat flagrando quæ beati fuerat nomine Rigoberti, eidem Sancto fieri votum ſuum inſtituit. Continuo aliam inſtaurans candelam, hujus almi viri duntaxat venerationi dicatam, venienſque ad locum deſignatum, munuſculum obtulit, et ante quæſita ſancti Dei pignera poſt orationem dormivit, evigilanſque deſideratam ſe ſoſpitatem recepiſſe probavit. Flodoard. Hiſt. lib. 2. cap. 15.

(*h*) Id. ibid. lib. 4. cap. 41, 49.

We have already learned of Mr. *Montfaucon*, from whence, in his opinion, thoſe Heathen miracles take their riſe: And, much after the ſame manner as *Diagoras* does, in reference to thoſe votive pictures mentioned by *Cicero*, that repreſent people ſaved in ſtorms at ſea, the ſame learned man accounts for their gaining credit in the world: "Among ſo "many diſtreſſed people, ſome (ſays he) recovered, "and others received no benefit. Of theſe laſt "no body ſpoke: Whereas thoſe who had reco-"vered, imputing their having been cured to the "favour of *Æſculapius*, did every where talk of their "recovery as a miracle: By which means the com-"mon deluſion was continued and propagated (*i*)." And whether the ſame reflections are not equally applicable to the Popiſh miracles, I leave to the judgment of the Reader. For my own particular, I cannot help thinking, that the miracles of Popery are a faithful tranſcript, or a direct continuation of the miracles of Paganiſm (*k*). But, as I ſet out upon this

(*i*) L'affluence du monde aux temples d' Eſculape etoit grande, les malades y venoient demander la ſanté, pluſieurs y paſſoient les nuits, & y dormoient pour avoir quelque ſonge favorable; le deſir d' en avoir en amenoit ſouvent. Après ces ſonges, les uns queriſſoient, les autres n'y trouvoient point de ſoulagement: de ceux-ci, on n'en parloit plus. Ceux qui queriſſoint, croioient devoir leur gueriſon aux ſonges & à la protection d' Eſculape, & racontoient par tout leur gueriſon comme miraculeuſe; cela ſervoit à continuer & à augmenter l' erreur publique. Montfauc. Antiq. tom. 2. part. 1. Liv. 2. chap. 14.

(*k*) La troiſiéme ſource d' ou procedent les miracles en Italie, c'eſt une erreur populaire qui s'y eſt gliſſée, & qui a pris preſentement de ſi profondes racines, qu'il eſt comme impoſſible de l' extirper: C'eſt qu'au moindre petit accident qu'il arrive aux Italiens, & la moindre maladie qu' ils ont, ils font un vœu à quelque ſtatuë ou image de la Vierge, ou quelque autre Saint pour en être delivrez. Toutes ſortes de mauvaiſes rencontres ne ſont pas fatales à la

this article, ſo I ſhall conclude it: In my apprehenſion, the only miracle upon which the truth or divinity

la vie, & toutes les maladies ne ſont pas mortelles; c'eſt ce qui fait qu'ils en réchapent fort ſouvent: mais par une ſuperſtition étrange, ou lieu d'en attribuer la gloire à Dieu ſeul, qui eſt le Seigneur de la vie & de la mort, ils attribuent le recouvrement de leur ſanté, ou la delivrance du danger ou ils etoient, aux ſtatuës ou images auſquelles ils ont fait vœu. Pour rendre leur reconnoiſance plus autentique, ſuivant la mauvaiſe coûtume qui s'eſt introduite, ils font faire un tableau ou eſt repreſenté ce que leur eſt arrivé, & eux dans l'acte d'implorer la ſtatuë ou l'image, qui pour cet effect eſt depeinte dans un des coins du tableau, & vers laquelle ils tendent les bras ou les mains jointes, avec ces trois lettres, P. G. R. qui ſignifient en Italien, *pro Gratia Ricevuta: Pour une grace reçuë.* On voit en Italie generalement de ces ſortes de vœux dans toutes les egliſes. Il y a toujours la quelque idole miraculeuſe qui reçoit les encens, & à laquelle on attache les tables des naufrages. On n'a que faire tapiſſerie dans ces ſortes de chapelles, car tous ces petits tableaux joints l'un à l'autre, couvrent toutes les murailles. On y en voit de toutes ſortes de façons. Les uns repreſentent des gens pourſuivis par des aſſaſſins; d'autres qui ont reçu des coups de Poignard, & d'autres battus ſur mer par de furieuſes tempêtes. Il y en a meme de ſort ſcandaleux; car on y voit des caroſſées de Meſſieurs & de Dames qui renverſent les uns ſur les autres; des filles forcées par leurs amans, & des femmes en couche repreſentées dans leurs lits d'une maniere fort laſcive & luxurieuſe. —— Ces tableaux qui ne ſont que de ſimples vœux, ont acquis peu à peu tant de credit ſur les eſprits du peuple, qu'ils paſſent preſentement pour de veritables miracles. ——— De ceci, Monſieur, & de tout ce que je vous ai rapporté ci-deſſus ſur le fait des miracles, vous pouvez comprendre de quelle force ſont ces belles legendes des vies de nouveaux Saints de l'egliſe de Rome; de quel poids doivent être ces grandes liſtes de miracles qui les accompagnent, & qui en ſont preſque toute la ſubſtance. Ils ont tous rendu la vuë aux aveugles, l'oüye aux ſourds, l'uſage de la langue aux muets; ils ont fait marcher droit les boiteux: Enfin, ils ont preſervé de toutes ſortes d'accidens, & gueri de toutes ſortes de maladies. Mais quand on vient à l'examen de tout cela, tout s'en va en fumée, & tout ſe reduit, au plus, a quelques petits tableaux, que quelques ſuperſtitieux, qui ont cru ſans fondement en avoir reçu des graces, ont fait faire. Hiſt. des Tromp. des Pretr. tom. 1. p. 253.

vinity of the religion of the old *Romans* was founded, was that intercourſe with the goddeſs *Egeria*, wherein *Numa* pretended to receive his inſtructions from heaven. And let the Gentleman ſhow us, how far this, or any other miracle in the religion of antient *Rome*, muſt diminiſh our aſſurance from human teſtimony, as to the miracles of the Goſpel.

But we are further told, that miracles do likewiſe abound in the religion of *Turkey*. And here again, I am not able to underſtand, what are the particular miracles of which the Gentleman would here avail himſelf. I ſuppoſe the religion of *Turkey* is contained in the *Alcoran*: And from thence we learn, that when it was objected to *Mahomet*, that he wrought no miracles, he denies not the charge, but goes about to juſtify himſelf by ſeveral reaſons, and comes at length to tell the world, that the miracles of *Moſes* and of *Jeſus* having proved ineffectual, God had now ſent him, in the laſt place, without miracles, to perſuade the world, by the power of the ſword, to ſubmit themſelves to the authority of heaven. So that the religion of *Turkey*, contained in the *Alcoran*, can furniſh the Gentleman with no miracles that can come in competition with thoſe of the Goſpel. No doubt, *Mahomet* aſſures us, that, by the hands of the Angel *Gabriel*, he had received his *Alcoran* from God; and that, under the direction of that Angel, he one night made a journey to the higheſt heavens. But pretenſions of this nature are not, I apprehend, quite ſo well fitted to the Gentleman's purpoſe. Nor is it to be denied, that ſome fabulous and legendary Writers aſcribe ſeveral miracles to this Impoſtor, ſuch as "his cleaving the moon in two, "and his being told by a ſhoulder of mutton of its "being poiſoned." But whatever paſſion the Gentleman may have to ſerve himſelf of ſuch miracles,

racles, he must know, they are all disclaimed by the learned Doctors of that religion; and *Mahomet* himself, as I have just now hinted, scruples not to own, in several places of his *Alcoran*, that he wrought no miracles (*l*). I am therefore, I say, at a loss to understand, what miracles, in the religion of *Turkey*, the Gentleman would here oppose to those of the Gospel. And, till he shall be pleased to declare himself upon this, and the other articles, I must in the mean while observe, that the credit of the Gospel miracles can suffer nothing from that infinite number of miracles, which, we are told, are every where to be found in the other religions of the world.

Whether the Gentleman, after having thrown out those general reflections, now means to give us a specimen of the proof, whereby, he would insinuate, some, at least, of that infinite number of miracles, so conspicuous in those other religions, are supported, I will not take upon me to affirm. But he comes to particulars, and assures us, that "one of the best attested miracles in all "profane history, is that which *Tacitus* reports of "*Vespasian*, who cured a blind man in *Alexandria*, "by

(*l*) Jesus Christ a fait plusieurs de ses miracles à la face du ciel & de la terre——C' est ce qu' on ne peut pas dire de Mahomed; il se fâche dans son Alcoran des signes & des prodiges; il en a fait, nous dit-on, dans son enfance & dans sa jeunesse, c' est a-dire, lors qu' il n' en etoit pas besoin; mais il n' en fait plus dans le cours de son ministere, lorsqu' il eût éte fort necessaire qu' il en eût fait. La Relig. des Mahomet. Tiré du Lat. de M. Reland. p. liii.

Il n' y a donc nulle apparence, conclud M. Reland, que la conte du pigeon puisse être rehabilité. Car si ce fait avoit quelque fondement dans l' histoire, ou même la tradition, les auteurs Arabes n' auroient pas manqué de la joindre, comme miraculeux, à tant d' autres, qui n' ont pas la moindre ombre de vraisemblance, comme, par exemple, que la lune soit descenduë du ciel pour le saluer, que les arbres soient venus lui faire la réverence, que les bêtes mêmes lui aient fait hommage, &c. Ibid. 267.

" by means of his ſpittle, and a lame man by the " mere touch of his foot, in obedience to a viſion " of the god *Serapis*, who had enjoined them to " have recourſe to the Emperor for thoſe miracu- " lous and extraordinary cures. And, all circum- " ſtances duly conſidered, it will appear, that no " evidence can well be ſuppoſed ſtronger for ſo groſs " and palpable a falſhood (*m*)." Poſſibly, indeed, no ſtronger evidence can be brought for ſo groſs a falſhood. And this being one of the beſt atteſted miracles in all profane hiſtory, and yet a groſs falſehood, one can have no difficulty in pronouncing all other miracles attended with leſs evidence downright forgery. But I am afraid, it is here meant, that for the truth of the miracles of the Goſpel, we have no ſtronger evidence, than we have for the truth of thoſe miracles that are ſaid to have been wrought by *Veſpaſian*; and conſequently, that their credit being no better, they can deſerve no better or higher rank in the eſteem of mankind. And, as I take this to be Gentleman's opinion, I muſt own he has done well to let us know, what is that particular evidence that attends *Veſpaſian*'s miracles. " The " ſtory (ſays he) may be ſeen in *Tacitus*; where " every circumſtance ſeems to add weight to the " teſtimony, and might be diſplayed at large with " all the force of argument and eloquence." Upon which having hinted ſeveral topics of perſuaſion, he concludes, that " no evidence can well be ſup- " poſed ſtronger." But I could have wiſhed that among thoſe topics he had condeſcended to diſplay ſome ſmall portion of his eloquence, in ſetting forth the nature and perfections of the god *Serapis*, with whoſe divinity the world now is not quite ſo well acquainted; and in explaining the reaſons or motives

(*m*) P. 192, 193.

tives that might have induced this god to work miracles. For, as I have laid it down in the beginning of this argument, I hold it for a firm principle and rule, that it is the distinct and certain knowledge of the author, and intention of the miracles wrought, whereby alone we can judge of their importance, or whether they ought to be regarded as divine operations. And what need there is of all the force of the Gentleman's argument and eloquence, in order to bring the miracles of *Serapis* to bear the face of a competition with those of the Gospel, one may learn from the account which *Tacitus* gives us of this deity. In short, he tells us,

" That *Serapis*, not quite so well satisfied, it " would seem, with his situation at *Sinope*, appeared " in a vision to *Ptolomy*, and admonished him to have " his image transported from thence to *Alexandria* : " But that *Ptolomy* not being forward enough in " his obedience, he found it necessary to appear to " him a second time, and with a threatening aspect " to renew his commands : That upon this *Ptolomy* sent off some ships with an embassy and presents : But that the people of *Sinope* refusing to " part with their god, *Serapis* appeared to their " King *Scydrothemis*, and not only threatened him, " but, whilst he delayed, afflicted him with several " distempers and calamities: In fine, that the people " continuing still obstinate in their refusal, the god " impatient of longer delay, his image of itself went " on board the ships ; and on the third day (a wonderful passage over so long a tract of sea) landed " at *Alexandria*, where a magnificent temple was " built for its service (*n*)."

This is the god whose miracles our Infidels would now have to balance the miracles of the blessed *Jesus.*

(*n*) Tacit. Hist. lib. 4. 83, 84.

fus. I confeſs, that without conſidering the nature and perfections of the god *Serapis*, and the end intended by his working miracles, the Gentleman is pleaſed to aſſure us, that no matters of fact can be juſtified by ſtronger evidence. Upon this, therefore, I would preſume to aſk, as he can be here in no fright of their being made the foundation of a ſyſtem of religion, what hinders the Gentleman from believing the truth of thoſe miracles? He acknowledges, there is here all the evidence that can ariſe from the nature and circumſtances of ſuch matters of fact, and that no evidence can well be ſuppoſed ſtronger: And one ſhould think, he is therefore bound, in reaſon, to yield to this evidence, or to admit the truth of thoſe facts that are thus ſupported by the ſtrongeſt evidence. Nor can the Gentleman juſtify his rejecting thoſe matters of fact as groſs and palpable falſhoods, becauſe they are miraculous events above the efficiency of the laws of nature. For this, manifeſtly, is either the ſetting up his own notions as the meaſure and ſtandard of truth, or the making the thing a reaſon againſt itſelf, which, where the thing in itſelf is poſſible, is conſiſtent with no principle of good ſenſe, and can be made good by no man whatſoever. So that if the Gentleman has no other objection to the miracles of *Veſpaſian*, but that they are miracles, and otherwiſe allows them to be ſupported by an evidence, than which no evidence can well be ſuppoſed ſtronger; this is all we pretend to ſhew or claim for the miracles of the Goſpel, an evidence, the ſtrongeſt that the nature of things can afford us: And upon this, we apprehend, the reality of their exiſtence is demonſtrated. Only it is to be obſerved, that although the admitting the miracles of *Veſpaſian*, can do no prejudice to the miracles of the Goſpel,

or

or in any meaſure leſſen their authority, nevertheleſs the compariſon muſt be held infinitely ridiculous.

After all, I violently ſuſpect, that thoſe miracles aſcribed to *Veſpaſian*, (in the intention of the Actor, altogether uſeleſs and unmeaning as to any thing of religion, and of no ſort of conſequence to mankind) have nothing in them ſupernatural or miraculous. Nor was the Emperor himſelf conſcious of any power or virtue capable of effecting ſuch events. On the contrary, he derides the notion: —— Being importuned——he is diffident and wavering,——he grows into confidence from the arguments of his flatterers. At what an immenſe diſtance is this caſe from that of our Lord and his Apoſtles! The plain hiſtory is this: Whilſt *Veſpaſian* was at *Alexandria*, being extremely intent upon the raiſing of money, and the procuring of corn to be ſent to *Rome*, ſo rapacious was he in his exactions, that he ſpared no rank or order of men, nor did he regard whether things were ſacred or profane. This brought upon him the hatred of the *Alexandrians*. And in thoſe circumſtances, one may eaſily imagine, the Prieſts of *Serapis* being greatly alarmed, failed not to employ all their craft, and to uſe their beſt endeavours to ſecure themſelves, or to prevent that oppreſſion to which they were expoſed. Now, ſo it happened, that, during *Veſpaſian*'s ſtay in that city; "A cer-
"tain man of *Alexandria* (as Mr. *Gordon* tranſlates
"the paſſage) one of the commonalty, noted for
"want of ſight, proſtrating himſelf at his feet, im-
"plored a cure for his blindneſs, by premonition
"from *Serapis*, the god whom that nation, devoted
"to ſuperſtition, adores beyond all others. He be-
"ſought the Emperor, *That with his ſpittle he would*
"*condeſcend to waſh his cheeks, and the balls of his*
"*eyes*. Another, lame in his hand, at the direction

" of the ſame god, prayed him *to tread upon it.*
" *Veſpaſian*, at firſt, derided and refuſed them. As
" they continued importunate, he wavered: Now,
" he feared the character and imputation of vanity,
" anon, was drawn into hopes, through the in-
" treaties of the ſupplicants, and the arguments of
" flatterers. At laſt, he ordered the Phyſicians to
" examine, whether ſuch blindneſs and ſuch lame-
" neſs were curable by human aid. The Phyſicians
" reaſoned doubtfully: *In this man the power of*
" *ſight was not wholly extinct, and would return were*
" *the obſtacles removed. The other man's joynts were*
" *diſtorted, and might be reſtored with regular preſſing*
" *and ſtraining. To the gods, perhaps, the cure was*
" *well pleaſing, and by them the Emperor was ordained*
" *the divine inſtrument to accompliſh it. To conclude,*
" *from the ſucceſs of the remedy, the glory would accrue*
" *to the Prince. If it failed, the wretches themſelves*
" *muſt bear the deriſion. Veſpaſian* therefore con-
" ceiving that within the reach of his fortune all
" things lay, and that nothing was any longer in-
" credible, performed the taſk with a chearful coun-
" tenance, before a multitude intent upon the iſſue.
" Inſtantly the lame hand recovered full ſtrength,
" and upon the eyes of the blind light broke in.
" Both events, thoſe who were preſent continue e-
" ven now to recount, when, from teſtification, any
" gain is no longer to be hoped. *Hence* Veſpaſian
" *was ſeized with a paſſion more profound for viſiting*
" *the reſidence of the deity, to conſult him about the*
" *ſtate and fortune of the empire* (*o*)." And

Thus the Prieſts of *Serapis*, and the revenues of their temple came to be in great ſafety; and, inſtead

(*o*) Tacit. Hiſt. lib. iv. cap. 81. Vid. Xiphilin. in Vitell. et Veſpaſian. Suetonius differs from Tacitus, and reports, that the man was lame in his leg.

stead of lying exposed to rigorous exactions, were in a fair way of gaining new acquisitions. And I doubt not but *Vespasian* left them greatly inriched with his presents: For, as the event mightily raised his reputation, deriving to him a certain air of divinity, or shewing him a particular favourite of the gods, it could not but prove highly acceptable. So that, from all the circumstances of the story, one is led to apprehend, that those two men, who insisted with so much importunity in beseeching *Vespasian* to cure them, and even directed him after what particular manner he might perform the cure, both of the one and of the other, were downright cheats, and only acted a part, (which neither *Vespasian* nor those about him, might be aware of) by the contrivance of the Priests of *Serapis*. And how can one judge otherwise, when one considers, that the god *Serapis*, was no more in those days, than he is now, a mere nothing; and therefore could appear to no man in a vision? At the same time one may suspect it was not, perhaps, unworthy of the foresight of the Emperor himself to bring about those events, as in a competition for the empire, they might prove of considerable consequence. But whatever those miracles be, true or false, it matters not. It is impossible they can, at any rate, affect the miracles of the Gospel, so as in the least to diminish their authority. Beyond all question, every matter of fact, independent in itself, must be attended with its own proper evidence, upon which alone its authority is grounded.

As to those other miracles, referred to by the Gentleman, so frequent in the church of *Rome*: A most melancholy circumstance it is, that any man has it in his power to make such objections to the miracles of the Gospel. It is well known what de-

solation

ſolution and ruin was, by the follies and wickedneſs of mankind, brought upon the religion of nature. And now the ſame infamous paſſions prevailing in the church of *Rome*, have, in like manner, laid waſte the religion of *Jeſus*. The charge, therefore, of the Apoſtle againſt the Heathen world, is too too applicable to that church, who have perverted the Goſpel into an engine of ſtate, or a mere ſyſtem of worldly policy. *They hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs*: Amidſt their unrighteous tenets and practices, they have quite confounded and overwhelmed the truths of the Goſpel, and cannot therefore but lie obnoxious to the judgments of God. *Becauſe that which may be known of God is manifeſt in them*; *for God*, in the Goſpel of his Son, *hath ſhewed it unto them. So that they are without excuſe: Becauſe that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful*; *but became vain in their imaginations, and their fooliſh heart was darkened. Profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools*; *and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man. They have changed the truth of God into a lye, and worſhip and ſerve the creature more than the Creator, who is bleſſed for ever.* And in ſuch a church, there may, indeed, be abundance of lying wonders, of fraud and impoſture; but how can one expect miracles, thoſe ſupernatural interpoſitions of Providence? It is from a virtue peculiar to the inſtitution of the Goſpel, that the church of *Rome* pretend to have miracles wrought among them: And to continue thoſe pretenſions, whilſt the inſtitution upon which they ground them, is, by their mixtures, ſo far depraved and adulterated, that it is any thing but the Goſpel of *Chriſt*, ſeems altogether abſurd and inconſiſtent. But, beſides this ſtrong preſumption, in general, againſt the miracles

of

of the church of *Rome*, certain it is, that the more prudent and learned of that communion do generally look upon them as pious frauds to raiſe and entertain the devotion of the weak and ignorant. In which light Cardinal *de Retz*, who could not but know their tricks, did undoubtedly conſider that miracle he mentions at *Saragoſſa*; but which the *Spaniſh* Inquiſition would have made it dangerous for any man to have declared. And, as in numberleſs inſtances, their forgeries have been detected; ſo ſome of their learned men have had the honeſty and courage to publiſh the truth, and, in ſome particulars, to expoſe the knavery of their Prieſts. In ſhort, the nature of their miracles, or the circumſtances that attend them, or the end and purpoſe they are meant to ſerve, are ſo extravagant, or ſo fooliſh and abſurd, ſo unworthy of God, and ſo repugnant to the Goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt*, that no conſiderate man can prevail with himſelf to regard them. And therefore, as the knavery and credulity, the frauds, the ignorance, and ſuperſtition prevailing in the church of *Rome*, are ſo very notorious, no man, who would govern his judgment by the real truth of things, can, from the pretended miracles of that church, be tempted to ſuſpect, or to call into queſtion the miracles of the Goſpel.

Theſe general reflections may here ſeem to be ſufficient, eſpecially as I have, in ſome ſort, pointed out the conformity of the Popiſh ceremonies and miracles with thoſe of the Heathen (*p*). But it may not

(*p*) Dr. Middleton, in his letter from Rome, has, in my apprehenſion, done good ſervice to the religion of the bleſſed Jeſus, whilſt he there clearly explains the ſource of moſt of the Popiſh idolatry and ſuperſtition, and ſtrongly repreſents them to the ſenſes of mankind. And, as ſuch arguments are apt to make a deeper

not be amiſs to obſerve further; there is hardly any thing miraculous among the Heathen, how abſurd ſoever,

deeper impreſſion on human minds, than can ariſe from abſtract reaſoning, I ſhall here tranſcribe ſome remarks of the Abbot de Marolles upon Ovid's Faſti, that ſeem to anſwer the ſame purpoſe. It would, perhaps, be tedious to mention all the particulars which the Abbot takes notice of. And therefore, paſſing by his obſervations concerning holy-days, the ſacred fire, incenſe, holy water, proceſſions, prayers and offerings for the dead, &c. I ſhall write out, as a ſpecimen, only thoſe paſſages that relate to their offerings and prayers to Saints and images, their miraculous images, their canonizations, and their Purgatory. And I chuſe to refer to this piece of Abbé de Marolles, not only becauſe the Author is of the church of Rome, but becauſe the Reader, who has any curioſity in ſuch matters, may ſatisfy himſelf without the trouble of turning over many books, and, at the ſame time, have an immediate view of the ſources themſelves.

With reſpect to Offerings and Prayers to Saints and Images.

Licia dependent longas velantia ſepes,
Et poſita eſt meritæ multa tabella deæ.
Ovid. Faſt. lib. iii. ver. 268.

"Theſe (ſays M. de Marolles) are the offerings of Hunters, "which had been vowed to Diana. For nothing is more com- "mon among the Antients, than vows hung up in temples, and "round the ſacred places. And here the Poet tells us, that in "this temple there are many inſcriptions upon tables, in honour "of the goddeſs,

"Et poſita eſt meritæ multa tabella deæ.

"In ſhort, there is a number of ſuch antient inſcriptions collected "together in books; ſome for having been delivered from pe- "rils at ſea, others for having been cured of a dangerous diſeaſe, "or for having recovered one's ſight when blind, or one's hear- "ing when deaf, &c. Pro redditis ſibi luminibus gratias agit, "ex viſo, pro ſe et Capſia Maxima conjuge, et Julia Frontina "filia, Caius Julius Frontinianus. And ſays Tibullus:

Nunc dea, nunc ſuccurre mihi; nam poſſe mederi
Picta docet templis multa tabella tuis.

"And

soever, of which the church of *Rome* do not seem to have been fond of imitating. One would think it

" And does not all this mightily correspond with what is at this " day practised ?

Sæpe deos aliquis peccando fecit iniquos :
Et pro delictis hostia blanda fuit.
Sæpe Jovem vidi, cum jam sua mittere vellet
Fulmina, thure dato, sustinuisse manum.
Lib. v. ver. 299.

" It is for the self-same reason that people make so many of- " ferings to Saints ; and that they are persuaded, that pilgri- " mages, candles, vows, and nine-days-devotions, have so much " efficacy. Nor do I herein incline to blame their intention, or " to condemn a custom, which Princes and Prelates authorise by " their example."

The institution of a Nine-days-devotion (Novendiale sacrum) among the Heathen (still prevailing in the church of Rome) came, as some people thought, immediately from heaven. It was observed particularly, when it rained stones ; which happened frequently. Seu voce cœlesti ex Albano monte missa (nam id quoque traditur) seu Aruspicûm monitu, manfit certe solenne, ut quandocunque idem prodigium nunciaretur, feriæ per novem dies agerentur. Liv. lib. i. § 31.

Solemni satis est voce movere preces.
Lib. vi. ver. 622.

" These solemn prayers were put up to Servius Tullius at his " tomb, or rather his image in the temple of Fortune. Whence " it appears, that he was esteemed a Saint, or a god, as the An- " tients spoke : For what is Saint with us, was with them divine " or a god. And, after this example, we, to this day, give the " name of *Divi* (gods) to our Saints."

With respect to Miraculous Images.

Creditur armiferæ signum cœleste Minervæ
Urbis in Iliacæ desiluisse juga. Ibid. ver. 421.

" Among us, they tell the like stories of images come down " from heaven, whereof the number is pretty considerable.

" And

it abundantly extravagant, to repreſent any of mankind whiſpering brute creatures, or entering into converſation

" And of the truth of this ſo confident are ſome people, that they " would bring a man into great danger, ſhould he go about to " diſabuſe them."

Signum erat in ſolio reſidens ſub imagine Tulli :
Dicitur hoc oculis oppoſuiſſe manum.
Et vox audita eſt, vultus abſcondite noſtros,
Ne natæ videant ora nefanda meæ.'
Veſte data tegitur : Vetat hanc Fortuna moveri :
Et ſic e templo eſt ipſa locuta ſuo :
Ore revelato quâ primum luce patebit
Servius, hæc poſiti prima pudoris erit.
Parcite, matronæ, vetitos attingere veſtes ;
Solemni ſatis eſt voce movere preces :
Sitque caput ſemper Romano tectus amictu,
Qui Rex in noſtra ſeptimus urbe fuit.
Arſerat hoc templum : Signo tamen ille pepercit
Ignis. ——— Ibid. ver. 613.

" This image (which lifted up its hands before its face, and " uttered theſe words, Cover my eyes that they may not behold " the execrable face of my daughter) was not of ſtone, nor of " marble, but of wood So that its preſervation amidſt the " flames, was counted among the Antients, a kind of miracle. " And indeed ſuch an event among us, would eaſily paſs for a " miracle ; where people are of opinion, that ſomething of di- " vinity reſides in certain images, wherein particularly, they are " well aſſured, God himſelf, the Virgin, and the Saints, like to " be honoured. The hiſtories of miraculous images at Rome, " and at Loretto, all over Italy, and in other places, are without " number. They reckon likewiſe, that in the burning of a " chapel, where Romulus's rod was kept, this rod was the only " thing on which the flames did not ſeize."

Here likewiſe Ovid, we ſee, tells us, that the goddeſs Fortune commanded that the image of Servius ſhould be kept always veiled. And in the church of Rome, there is an incredible number of veiled images, which, at certain periodical times, or upon ſome extraordinary occaſions, they unveil with great pomp and ſolemnity ; whereby the devotion of the people is mightily revived, and the profits of the Prieſts greatly increaſed. Vid. Tromp. des Prêtr. tom. ii. p. 157, &c.

They

converſation with them, and making them ſwear, or bringing them under ſolemn engagements, that, af-

They have too at Dijon a miraculous crucifix, which is ſaid to have expreſſed itſelf after this manner: "Cover me, that I may not "ſee the iniquities of my people; and let never any man preſume "to uncover me." But this prohibition notwithſtanding, one of their Priors came to have the boldneſs to uncover it: And the circumſtances of this audacious attempt are abundantly entertaining. Ibid. tom. i. p. 27.

With reſpect to the Canonization of Saints.

Nuper erat dea facta. —— Lib. iii. ver. 677.

"In thoſe days they made gods and goddeſſes, whom they "placed in their Kalendar; as we now a-days can make Saints, "both male and female. With reſpect to merit, however, there "is no compariſon Mean while, 'tis from the language of the "Antients, that we ſometimes in Latin call the bleſſed faithful, "*Divi* et *Divæ* (gods and goddeſſes). For in common language "we content ourſelves with giving them the title of Saints. Nor "becauſe we have a number of things from Paganiſm, from "which God, in his pure mercy, hath been pleaſed to deliver "us, are the Juſt, therefore, and the Faithful the leſs juſt or the "leſs faithful. God hath ſanctified thoſe uſages and cuſtoms "that were formerly profane."

With reſpect to Purgatory.

Inque foco corpus pueri vivente favilla
Obruit, humanum purget ut ignis onus.

"Obſerve this purgation by fire. This paſſage greatly re-"ſembles what we have lately read in Seneca the Tragedian.— "Quicquid in nobis tui mortale fuerat ignis injectus tulit. "And does not this likewiſe bear the image of our Purga-"tory?"

But a far more ſtriking image of Purgatory we have from Plato in his Phæd. where we likewiſe find the doctrine of venial and mortal ſins: πολὺ δὲ πῦρ, καὶ πυρὸς μεγάλας ποταμούς.— — καὶ ἐκεῖ δικῶσί τε, καὶ καθαρόμενοι, καὶ τῶν τε ἀδικημάτων λύοντες

ter such a particular manner they will not fail to form their future conduct. This, however, is said to have happened in the case of *Pythagoras*, who meeting a *Daunian* bear, which had done great mischief to the inhabitants, came to prevail with the savage beast to make oath, that, for the future, she would not touch a living creature (*q*). And, after the same manner, when St. *Francis*, the founder of the *Franciscan* Order, came to the town of *Eugubium*, being informed that a wolf from the neighbourhood was very destructive to their cattle, the good Saint undertakes to deliver them; and finding out the wolf, after some conversation, he engages the ravenous creature to promise, upon honourable terms, that he would do no further harm to the cattle of that place (*r*). Thus the wonders wrought by the Popish Saint and the Heathen Philosopher are pretty equal and similar. But I am afraid there are other instances, of worse consequence, wherein it may be said,

διδόντες δίκας, ἀπολύονται. — — οἱ δ' ἂν δοξώσιν ἀνιάτως ἔχειν, διὰ τὰ μεγέθη ἁμαρτημάτων, — — τοῦτους δὲ ἡ προσήκουσα μοῖρα ῥιπτεῖ εἰς τὸν Τάρταρον, ὅθεν οὔποτε ἐκβαίνουσιν. In another world there is much fire, and mighty rivers of fire. There departed souls have their abode, till being purified, and having suffered the punishment of their sins, they are discharged. But those who are incurable, because of the hainousness of their crimes, are cast into Tartarus, from whence they never are delivered. Vid. Virg. Æn. vi. ver. 735.

(*q*) Εἰ δὲ δεῖ πιστεύειν τοῖς ἱστορήσασι περὶ αὐτοῦ, παλαιοῖς δὲ ὄσι καὶ ἀξιολόγοις, μέχρι καὶ τῶν ἀλόγων ζώων διῆκνεῖτο αὐτοῦ ἡ νουθέτησις. τὴν μὲν γὰρ Δαυνίαν ἄρκτον λυμαινομένην τοὺς ἐνοίκους καταχὼν, ὥς φασι, καὶ ἐπαφησάμενος χρόνον συχνὸν, ψωμίσας τε μάζῃ καὶ ἀκροδρύοις, ὁρκώσας τε μηκέτι ἐμψύχου ἐφάπτεσθαι, ἀπέλυσεν· ἡ δ' εὐθὺς εἰς τὰ ὄρη καὶ τοὺς δρυμοὺς ἀπαλλαγεῖσα, οὐκέτ' ὤφθη παράπαν ἐπιοῦσα οὐδ' ἀλόγῳ ζῴῳ. Porph. de vit. Pythag. § 23, 24.

(*r*) Geddes's View of all the Orders of Monks, &c. p. 54.

ſaid, Popiſh Prieſts have imitated Heathen Prieſts. The learned *Montfaucon* apprehends, that the Heathen were wont to ſuborn perſons to counterfeit diſeaſes, that upon addreſſing themſelves for relief to their deities, the cure might appear miraculous. And Mr. *D'Emiliane* aſſures us, that in the church of *Rome*, ſome poor people have the patience for five or ſix years to feign themſelves lame, paralytic, or blind, that upon their applying for deliverance to ſome Saint, or to ſome image of the *Virgin*, they may give occaſion to a miracle; which they find very beneficial, and to afford them good ſubſiſtence; and wherein the Prieſts, when it happens likewiſe to ſerve their intereſt, do not fail to encourage them (*s*). And are thoſe the miracles, which the Gentleman would put in balance againſt the miracles of our Saviour and his Apoſtles? Mr. *D'Emiliane*, whom I have frequently referred to, was a ſecular Prieſt in *France*. He left the Popiſh church, and turned Proteſtant. With great moderation he has, in ſome letters, given us a hiſtory of the frauds of

(*s*) La ſeconde cauſe des miracles eſt la ruſe de certains gueux. ——Il y en a qui ont la patience de contrefaire les boiteux, paralitiques, ou aveugles, cinq ou ſix ans durant, pour aller faire enſuite un miracle dans quelque egliſe, attribuant leur deliverance à quelque image de la Vierge, ou à quelque Saint. Le profit qui leur revient de cela, eſt que le peuple etant informé du miracle qui leur eſt arrivé, les croit être de fort bonnes perſonnes, & de grands amis de Dieu, puiſqu' ils en ont reçu des faveurs ſi ſignalées. C'eſt ce qui porte les gens à leur faire de bonnes aumônes, pour avoir part à leurs prieres. Quelques perſonnes riches & devotes en prennent même fort ſouvent le ſoin, & font qu' il ne leur manque rien tout le reſte de leur vie. Les Prêtres & les Moines leur donnent auſſi leur entretien, lorſqu' ils ont donné du credit à quelqu' une de leurs chapelles, & qu' il en revient un profit conſiderable. On m' a montré pluſieurs de ces pauvres la dans les convens, qui vivent preſentement parmi les domeſtiques fort à leur aiſe, & ſans rien faire. Tromp. des Prêtr. tom. i. p. 252.

of the Prieſts and Monks of that communion. What he relates is from his own knowledge, and from him we learn what kind of miracles prevail in the church of *Rome*: How people, from their earlieſt infancy, are trained up in the belief of them: How dangerous it is to deny them, or, in any degree, to call them into queſtion: And that they are all mere impoſture. Of thoſe miracles he gives many particular inſtances. And I could almoſt preſume to recommend this Gentleman's book to thoſe, who would like to read a diſpaſſionate account of ſome of the practices of the *Roman* church.

There is one preſumption more, whereby the Gentleman would prejudice the world againſt the Goſpel-miracles. "In the infancy (ſays he) of "new religions, the wiſe and learned commonly "eſteem the matter too inconſiderable to deſerve "their attention or regard: And when afterwards "they would willingly detect the cheat, in order "to undeceive the deluded multitude, the ſeaſon is "now gone, and the records and witneſſes, who "might clear up the matter, have periſhed beyond "recovery. No means of detection remain, but "thoſe which muſt be drawn from the very teſti-"mony itſelf of the Reporters: And theſe, though "always ſufficient with the judicious and knowing, "are commonly too fine to fall under the compre-"henſion of the vulgar (*t*)." No doubt, the Gentleman is fully maſter of the Goſpel-hiſtory; and cannot therefore but be fully ſenſible, that, in the infancy of the Chriſtian religion, things were quite otherwiſe than he would here repreſent them. And as it appears from the hiſtory itſelf, ſo, in the courſe of our argument, I ſhall have occaſion to explain, that the wiſe and learned among the *Jews* did by no

(*t*) P. 198.

no means eſteem the matter too inconſiderable to deſerve their attention and regard; but that, greatly alarmed, they, for ſeveral years, and with the keeneſt paſſions, inquired into the miracles of *Jeſus*, and eagerly went about to ſuppreſs his religion upon its firſt appearance, and obſtinately perſiſted in uſing all poſſible means to prevent its gaining credit in the world.

Thus far, I hope, it is manifeſt, that the preſumptions offered by the Gentleman, againſt the certainty of the Goſpel-miracles, are of no moment, and can never render thoſe miracles of a doubtful or ſuſpected credit, or, in any meaſure, abate our aſſurance as to the reality of their exiſtence. But the objection that comes directly to the purpoſe, and upon the ſtrength of which the whole cauſe of Infidelity depends, is this:

"No teſtimony (ſays he) is ſufficient to eſtabliſh "a miracle, unleſs the teſtimony be of ſuch a kind, "that its falſhood would be more miraculous than "the fact which it endeavours to eſtabliſh.—This "indeed ſuppoſes, that the teſtimony upon which a "miracle is founded may poſſibly amount to an in-"tire proof, and that the falſhood of that teſti-"mony would be a kind of prodigy. But, 'tis "eaſy to ſhew, that we have been a great deal too "liberal in our conceſſions, and that there never "was a miraculous event, in any hiſtory, eſtabliſh-"ed on ſo full an evidence.

"For there is not to be found, in all hiſtory, any "miracle atteſted by a ſufficient number of men, of "ſuch unqueſtioned good ſenſe, education, and "learning, as to ſecure us againſt all deluſion in "themſelves; of ſuch undoubted integrity, as to "place them beyond all ſuſpicion of any deſign to "deceive

(a) P. 182, 183.

" deceive others; of ſuch credit and reputation in " the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to " loſe in caſe of being detected in any falſhood; " and, at the ſame time, atteſting facts, performed " in ſuch a public manner, and in ſo celebrated a " part of the world, as to render the detection un- " avoidable: All which circumſtances are requiſite " to give us a full aſſurance in the teſtimony of " men (*x*)." In theſe circumſtances, therefore, by the Gentleman's own confeſſion, the falſhood of a man's teſtimony would be a kind of prodigy, and more miraculous than the miracle which he relates. And in this caſe, he rightly judges, the Relator may pretend to command our belief. But ſuch a caſe, he aſſures us, never happened.

This, I ſay, is the objection, in the truth of which lies the whole ſtreſs of the cauſe the Gentleman defends. And, as he has here ſuggeſted the principles of moral evidence, or laid down a ſure and wide foundation, upon which human teſtimony, with reſpect to matters of religion, may reſt ſecure, and ſtand firm and unſhaken, I likewiſe moſt willingly appeal to the ſame principles, and ſubmit the cauſe to their deciſion. In oppoſition, therefore, to this objection, I take upon me to affirm:

There is to be found, in the hiſtory of the Goſpel, a long continued ſeries of miracles, atteſted by a ſufficient number of men, of ſuch unqueſtioned good ſenſe, education, and learning, as to ſecure us againſt all deluſion in themſelves; of ſuch undoubted integrity as to place them beyond all ſuſpicion of any deſign to deceive others; of ſuch credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to loſe in caſe of being detected in any falſhood; and, at the ſame time, atteſting facts, performed in ſuch a public manner, and in ſo celebrated a part of the

(*x*) P. 182, 183.

the world, as to render the detection unavoidable. All this, I ſay, I take upon me to affirm: And all this, I hope, the Reader will come to find clearly made out in the following argument. Only, as this argument was compoſed many years before the publication of the Gentleman's *Eſſays*, and now comes abroad without any alteration, it cannot well be expected, that one ſhall find thoſe articles regularly explained in the ſame order, wherein they are here ſet down from the objection. But I am in good hopes, that the judicious Reader will find them demonſtrated, one or other of them, in almoſt every branch of the reaſoning. Nor are thoſe ſilly cavils, which ſome expreſſions in the objection (*education, learning, credit, and reputation in the eyes of mankind*) ſeem to portend, at all to be regarded. And if herein I injure the Gentleman, he is at liberty to bring them forth, and let the world judge of their importance.

After having given out his *objections* and *preſumptions* againſt miracles, with a particular eye to thoſe of the Goſpel, the Gentleman ſeems to bethink himſelf, and would inform the world, after what manner, or from what particular motives, the firſt Publiſhers of the Chriſtian revelation (as the miracles they pretend to are all forgery) came to be engaged and ſupported in their arduous undertaking. And upon this, he is pleaſed to offer us theſe reflections, and to recommend them, in the caſe of the Apoſtles, by his bare authority. "The wiſe (ſays "he) lend a very academic faith to every report "which favours the paſſions of the Reporter, whe-"ther it magnifies his country, his family or him-"ſelf, or in any other way ſtrikes in with his na-"tural inclinations and propenſities. But what "greater temptation than to appear a Miſſionary, a "Prophet,

" Prophet, an Ambaſſador from Heaven? Who " would not encounter many dangers and difficul- " ties to attain ſo ſublime a character? Or if, by the " help of vanity and a heated imagination, a man " has firſt made a convert of himſelf, and entered " ſeriouſly into the deluſion; whoever ſcruples to " make uſe of pious frauds, in ſupport of ſo holy " and meritorious a cauſe (*y*)?" Here, I ſay, the Gentleman would have the world to take his word, and to reſt aſſured, that either vain-glory or enthuſiaſm was the great ſpring of action in the firſt Publiſhers of the Goſpel; and that in carrying on their deſign, they ſcrupled not to make uſe of pious frauds, or to forge miracles. But how very groundleſs the accuſation is, the following argument will, I flatter myſelf, clearly demonſtrate.

And, I hope too, it will there evidently appear, that the falſhood of the teſtimony of the Apoſtles, would be more miraculous, if I may ſpeak ſo, than any miracle they relate; or it would be a kind of prodigy, whoſe exiſtence among mankind is ſimply impoſſibly: For as the Apoſtles in their teſtimony could not poſſibly become guilty of falſhood, without ſuſpending or altering the moſt eſſential principles of human nature; and as thoſe principles, the very ſame with that of ſelf-preſervation, are abſolutely unalterable, and can be ſuſpended by no Being whatſoever: So the falſhood of their teſtimony, being directly oppoſite to thoſe principles, wholly deſtructive of their very being, cannot but be held an event altogether impoſſible; or, if one may expreſs it in the Gentleman's dialect, would be counted infinitely more miraculous, than any of thoſe miracles reported in the Goſpel; for the effecting of which, nothing more is neceſſary but the ſuſpending or

(*y*) P. 196, 185.

or altering of the arbitrary laws of nature. This, I ſay, is what I hope will be made appear in the following argument. And it is that which the Gentleman confeſſes may pretend to command his belief. But this notwithſtanding, I muſt have leave to think, that the making it a neceſſary quality in the atteſtation of a miracle, that the falſhood of the teſtimony ſhall be more miraculous than the miracle itſelf (z); or, to ſpeak intelligibly, ſhall infer a ſuſ-

(z) When people talk of an event as miraculous, it is to be underſtood, that in the nature of things, that event is poſſible, or capable of being effected. As therefore I cannot ſuppoſe the teſtimony of the Apoſtles, concerning the miracles of Jeſus, to be falſe, without ſuppoſing an event, not miraculous, but impoſſible, or that therein the moſt eſſential principles and laws, whereby human minds, in all circumſtances, are abſolutely governed, muſt have been ſuſpended or altered; it is plain, that in the caſe of the Apoſtles, the Gentleman's demand is abſurd and impertinent. Nor am I able to conceive any event, wherein it can poſſibly happen, that the falſhood of the teſtimony would prove miraculous. No doubt, there are principles or laws of the moral world, as well as of the material world, which, in ſome inſtances, may be ſuſpended or altered: Thus a man's Foreſight may be extended beyond the limits of human underſtanding, and apprehend things that lie hid in futurity, which we call Propheſy: Thus likewiſe, a man's Knowledge may be enlarged, or his mind may be opened, all of a ſudden, to perceive things highly valuable, which he was not able to have known of himſelf, or which he could not have known without a tedious diſcipline, or long ſtudy and application: And thus again a man's Affections and diſpoſitions, his inward ſprings of action, obſtinately, or perhaps by long habit, irreſiſtibly bent to idolatry and ſuperſtition, to impiety and wickedneſs, may be changed ſuddenly, and the man become forthwith rational in his religion, and univerſally pious and virtuous. In ſuch inſtances, I ſay, the laws of the moral world may be ſuſpended or altered; and in all ſuch inſtances one has the notion of ſomething poſſible, and which may juſtly be termed Miraculous. But, in any inſtance, to form the notion of a falſe atteſtation, which can appear, or with any ſort of propriety can be called miraculous, is not, I confeſs, within the reach of my imagination. So that the Gentleman's gene-

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penſion or alteration of the eſſential immutable laws of human nature, an event abſolutely impoſſible, is going beyond the bounds of reaſon, and laying down a condition that is demanded by none of the principles of moral evidence.

I ſhall conclude with anſwering a queſtion gravely propounded by the Gentleman: "Is the conſequence "juſt (ſays he) becauſe ſome human teſtimony has "the utmoſt force and authority in ſome caſes, "when it relates the battles of *Philippi* or *Pharſalia*, "for inſtance, that therefore all kinds of teſtimo-"ny muſt, in all caſes, have equal force and autho-"rity (*a*)?" No, by no means. But, where the teſtimony is ſupported by an evidence equal to that which procures credit to the battles of *Pharſalia* and *Philippi*, I hope it deſerves equally to be regarded. And the Gentleman will give me leave to ſay, that, in my apprehenſion, the teſtimony of the Apoſtles, in relation to the matters of fact reported in the Goſpel, is ſupported by an evidence incomparably ſtronger. So that leaving this Forger of new arguments in the peaceable poſſeſſion of that odd groteſque figure, in which, pretending to be very witty, at the end of his *Eſſay of Miracles*, he chuſes to entertain his Reader, and to offer himſelf to the contempt or the deriſion of the Public, or rather to the pity of all good men; I ſhall only add, I am apt to think, it will do the Gentleman no diſſervice to beſtow a thought or two upon this little Anecdote:

"Some

ral criterion, whereby he would have us judge of the truth of miracles, namely, that "the falſhood of the teſtimony muſt be "more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to eſtabliſh," is, in my apprehenſion, void of all ſenſe and meaning, more contemptible than his opinion concerning miracles, which, however abſurd, is nevertheleſs intelligible.

(*a*) P. 196.

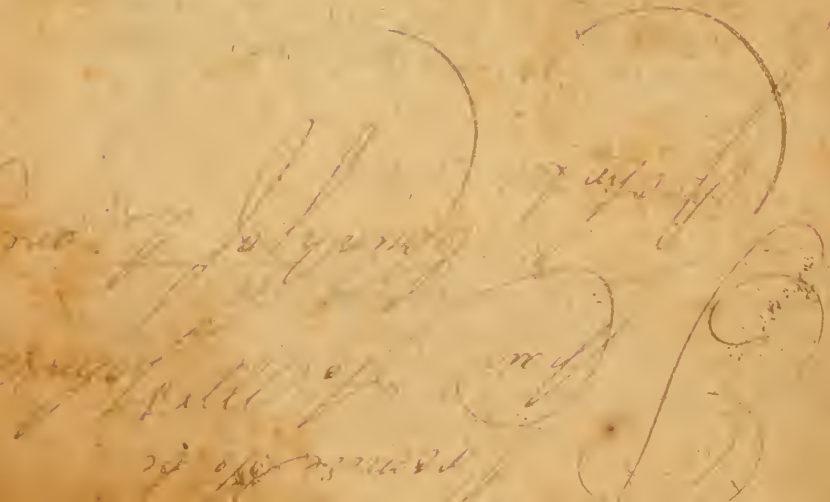
" Some *Clazomenians*, who happened to be at " *Sparta*, had the insolence to do over with foot " the public benches of the Judges; upon which " the *Ephori*, not in the least discomposed, caused " this public proclamation to be made, Ἐξέσω Κλαζο- " μενίοις ἀχημονεῖν, *The* Clazomenians *have leave to* " *act unhandsomely, and below the character of Gen-* " *tlemen* (*b*)."

Upon the whole, it is apparent, that as a miracle is an event in itself credible, and a proper object of human belief; and that no objection against its existence can be drawn from the nature of the fact, or from the common experience of mankind: So the Gentleman's presumptions against the truth of miracles, whereby he would infringe the credit of the miracles of the Gospel, are of no moment, and can in no degree impair the authority of those miracles, or induce us in the least to suspect the reality of their existence.

Our way, therefore, being thus far, I would fain think, sufficiently cleared; or having made it manifest, that one may safely appeal to the writings of the New Testament as authentic history, to which no reasonable exception can be taken; I shall now proceed to our main argument. *And may the Father of lights, the great Parent of mankind, in whose hands are the spirits of all living, graciously open our minds to perceive the truth, and effectually dispose our hearts to embrace it.*

(*b*) Ælian. Var. Hist. lib. 2. cap. 15.

The End of the First VOLUME.



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